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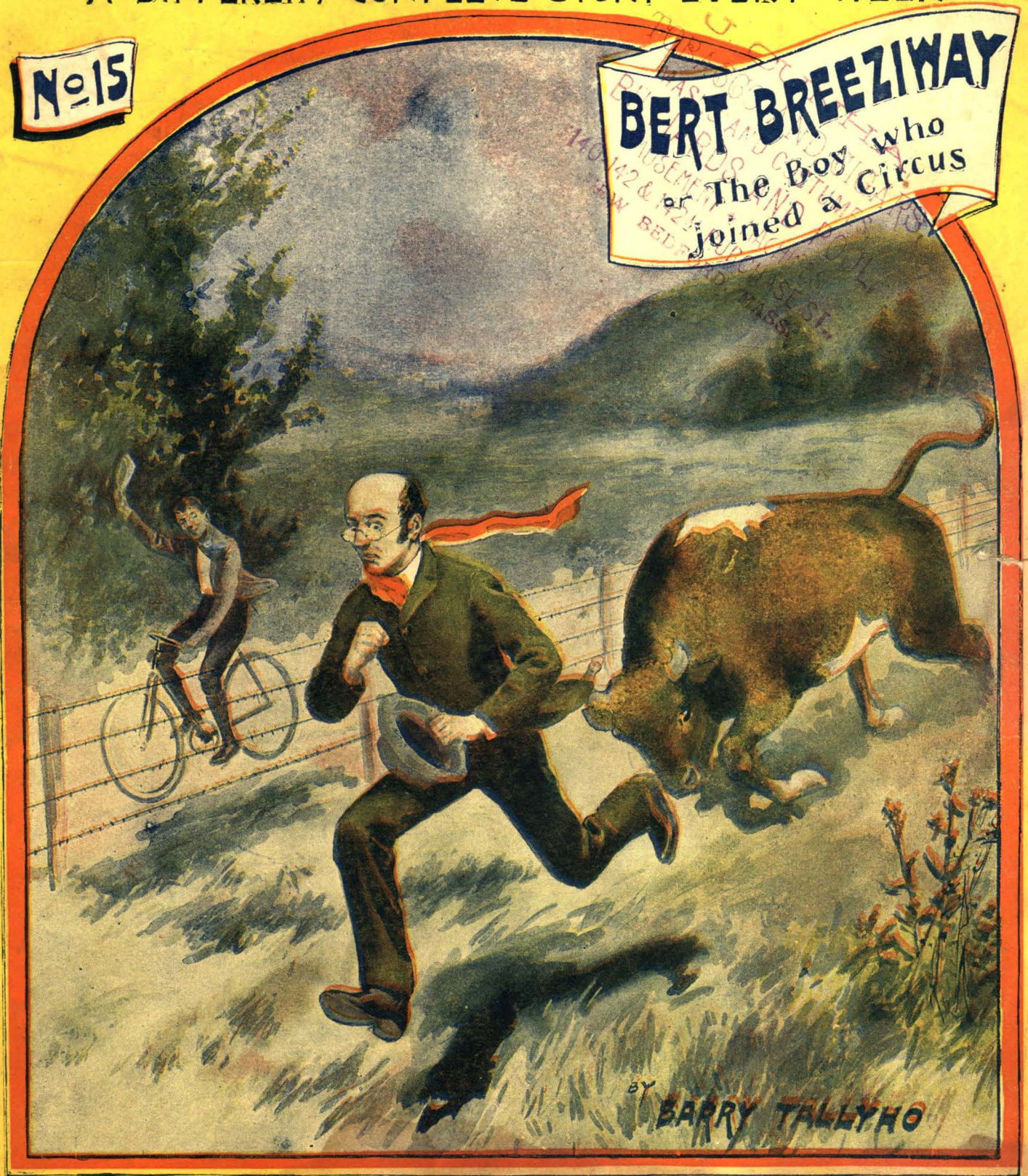
FIVE CENTS

BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No 15

BERT BREEZIWAY
or The Boy who
joined a Circus



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BRAVE & BOLD

A Different Complete Story Every Week

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BERT BREEZIWAY;

OR,

The Boy Who Joined a Circus.

By BARRY TALLYHO.

CHAPTER I.

A BOY, A BICYCLE AND A BULL.

"Hoop-la! Clear the way, for we are coming! Let her go—not slow!"

"Don't yez dare to run into me, be jabers! Av ye do, Oi'll bate yer hid off, that Oi will!"

"Clear the way and open the switch, then! Here we come a-flying! Look out for the locomotive! I'm going to let her rip!"

And "let her rip" he most certainly did. For, with the last word, Bert Breeziway threw his feet up clear of the pedals, set the front wheel of his bicycle straight as a die, and went flying down the hill with the velocity of a projectile.

It was a reckless, heedless venture.

The descent was steep, and the path was a narrow one, not over two feet wide at the most. On either side a field of prickly bushes, sown thickly, fenced in the way.

But the very dare-deviltry of the undertaking was the attraction that caught Bert Breeziway. Bold to a fault, the element of danger was a spice that added zest to his sport and sent the blood bounding through his veins with keenest delight.

The Milesian gentleman below him on the path did not appear much delighted, however; and if his blood, too, was bounding, it was only because it must perforce follow the movements of his limbs. For the gentleman was bouncing about in a very lively fashion.

He was halfway down the path when, hearing a noise, he turned and saw the wheel coming.

It was bearing straight down upon him, and, naturally, his ire was aroused in a moment.

"Shtop, ye omadhaun!" shrieked the Irishman, shaking his fist vigorously, and wishing the boy's head was at the end of it.

But Bert did not stop.

"Too busy now; come around next week," he cried, gleefully.

"Begob, as sure as me name's Dinny Mulcahey—" began the laborer.

He paused because he could think of nothing forcible enough to add, and began to render the air sulphurous with oaths and curses.

Then, turning, he fled wildly down the hill.

But on came the wheel. Right at his back it was now.

With a startled howl, Denny Mulcahey leaped off the path, landing squarely in a clump of thorny bushes.

The succeeding moment Bert and the bike flashed past.

The unfortunate Denny's feelings were in no degree softened by a laugh, free and blithe as the summer air, that floated over Bert's shoulder back to his ears.

The dare-devil rider of the bicycle had not abated his speed. Rather, he had increased it. On he shot, unruffled and triumphant, and was now near the foot of the descent.

"Oh, by George!" exclaimed Bert, suddenly.

All at once another person had burst upon his view in the path before him.

The bushes were very tall at the spot, and the man had been bending over to watch the flight of a butterfly near the ground.

The insect arose in the air, and the man straightened up. Then Bert saw him.

"Hey, there!" he cried.

The man looked around, with a jump. He gave a bigger jump when he saw the bicycle bearing so rapidly down upon him.

For a moment it seemed as though his faculties were paralyzed, and he was incapable of action. He stood staring at the bicycle, apparently unable to move.

His eyes grew big and round as saucers, filled with the startled stare of terror; his hair fairly rose on end, and his mouth was agape with surprise.

He was a very tall and thin man, wearing a frock coat and a suit of solemn black. There was a certain look of dusty book

BRAVE AND BOLD.

knowledge about him that would suggest he must be connected with a school or other institution of learning.

"Hey!" cried Bert, "clear the track, there! Out of the way for the flying express!"

The shout seemed to break the spell that bound the other.

There was no help for it. The man turned and fled wildly down the hill, pursued by the relentless bicycle.

"Oh, oh! This is awful! This is dreadful!" cried the fugitive.

He presented a comical sight. His body was bent half over, and his long legs were flying up and down like piston-rods.

He got over the ground at a good rate, but still faster came the wheel.

The bicycle was just behind the flying man, when, fortunately, he reached the foot of the descent. Here the tall, thorny bushes came to an end, and were replaced by level fields, separated from the road by fences.

There was no time to be particular, or to pick and choose. The man hastily tumbled over the first fence he came to.

"Thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "Truly, it was just in time! Another second would have been too much. I am completely exhausted."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What an indignity to put upon a man of the high scholarly attainments and standing in society of Dr. Larrupp!" he added.

With a careless glance about, the doctor started to cross the field.

He had covered about half the distance across, when a bellow smote his ears that fairly curdled the blood in his veins.

Looking around, he discovered an infuriated bull dashing toward him.

"Horror upon horror's head! Heaven and earth protect us!" cried the doctor, frantically. "I'm lost—I'm lost!"

He started on a wild run for the fence, with the bull at his heels.

The bull had been lying beside the fence at one end of the field, and for that reason the doctor had not noticed him before.

He was a particularly ferocious animal, for if the doctor had not been under the necessity of crossing the fence in such a hurry, he might have seen a board near where he entered the pasture bearing the legend:

"BEWARE OF THE BULL!"

Still, it is possible that the beast might have suffered Dr. Larrupp to cross his domain unmolested had not that worthy gentleman of learning been so imprudent as to wear about his neck a red silk handkerchief.

Bert Breeziway, flying along on his bicycle, whose speed, as it reached a level stretch, was now diminishing, heard the bull's enraged bellow above the whirr of his wheel.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" exclaimed Bert, as he glanced around and took in the situation; "there's going to be more fun!"

But the doctor did not exactly view it in that light.

"Oh my! Oh, my!" he groaned, as he stretched his long legs over the ground as fast as he could run. "This will be the death of me!"

"Go it!" yelled Bert, "go it! I'll bet on the bull!"

"With the greatest pleasure, I believe I could see that young fiend roasted alive over a slow fire!" exclaimed the doctor, audibly.

The pounding of the bull's hoofs almost at his heels admonished him that he had better save his breath for sprinting purposes.

On he ran, exerting himself to the utmost, throwing every particle of strength he could summon into his efforts.

But the bull was just behind.

Lowering his head, the animal made a decisive charge.

One instant, and he was upon the doctor.

He set those broad horns under the man's coat-tails, and gave his head a vigorous upward toss.

The doctor was lifted clean off the ground and sent flying into the air. Fortunately for him, those wide, branching horns were tipped, as a precaution against such an occasion as the present.

Up he went like a shuttle-cock.

"Hello!" cried Bert, heartlessly. "Giving you a lift, eh? I'll put all my spare coin on the bull."

In his interest he had dismounted and stood watching the affair.

The doctor came down on the other side of the fence, squarely in a puddle of very dirty and muddy water.

He slowly arose to his feet and stumbled out of the pool.

He was, indeed, a sight worthy a second glance.

From crown to toe he was sopping wet. His hair was matted with mud, and his face was splashed with it. Likewise was his clothing, while from every part of his body the water ran in streams.

As he waddled along, he appeared a veritable human Niagara.

"I guess we won't linger to witness the conclusion of this incident," said Bert, airily. "Time presses, and we must tear ourselves away."

He leaped upon his bicycle and rode off, followed by the indignation of Dr. Larrupp, who shook a muddy fist after him in impotent rage.

"Well," mused Bert, "I must say I'm getting along very fairly. I've started to ride from my home in Shadydale over to the academy at Forest Heights, only twenty miles away, and I've had a little matter of half a dozen adventures on the way. Oh, well, let them come! They'll find me ready for them, and the more, the merrier."

He started to wheel down the slope, and recklessly "let her go."

On flew the bicycle, gaining speed with every revolution of the tires. Onward it shot, like a thing of life, as though eager to reach the steel tracks glistening in the sun far below.

Bert's eyes sparkled with keen enjoyment, and his cheeks flushed with health.

At last the greater part of the hill was at his back, and the steel rails were not so far away. Now they were nearer, now nearer still.

Suddenly a whistle, shrill and piercing, broke the stillness of the air.

"Better slow down a bit, if I don't want to be ground to powder," Bert muttered, and was about to suit the action to the word, when he made a discovery that curdled the very blood in his veins.

A child had suddenly appeared upon the railroad track, directly in the path of the approaching train.

A little, sunny-haired tot she was, but a few years of age, innocently playing between the deadly tracks because she knew no better.

Suddenly from a cottage by the roadside, so hidden among the trees that he had not seen it before, rushed a woman.

She was waving her arms wildly in the air, and was, evidently, frantic with distress.

"Oh!" she cried, with the wild anguish only a mother's heart can know, "my baby! my baby! Save her! save her! Save my little baby! She will be ground to pieces! Oh, God!"

"Not while Bert Breeziway is on the top of this planet!" exclaimed that worthy, with fierce resolve. "If that little thing goes under, she'll have me for company. I'll save her, ma'am, or they'll have to rake my scattered pieces together for burial! Now, then, to put in some scorching such as I've never put in before!"

He leaned over the handle-bar, set his teeth together, and worked the pedals desperately.

The bicycle shot forward like an arrow toward the track, on which the child still lingered in innocent play.

Onward thundered the train.

It was now so near that it seemed Bert's bold attempt must surely be in vain, and himself, as well as the babe, be mangled and crushed to death under its pitiless wheels.

CHAPTER II.

BERT SAVES THE BABY.

If the little one would only become frightened at the approaching giant and run off the track! Then all would be well.

But no. Instead of alarmed, she is pleased. It is a novel sight to her, and she enjoys it.

She stands midway between the rails, and laughs, and claps her little hands and crows her delight.

On sweeps Bert.

On rushes the train.

Two seconds now will tell the story of life or death.

The engine dashes on, seeming like a car of Juggernaut swooping down upon the child.

At the same instant Bert makes a last desperate spurt and is on the track.

A shriek of wildest anguish bursts from the mother's lips, as she witnesses her little one's doom, and sees the gallant rescuer dash also into the jaws of death.

Then the rushing train hides everything from her sight.

But just the briefest space of time before, Bert Breeziway, shooting like an arrow across the track, leans far over toward the frightened child.

Swinging one hand down, he clutches her by the arm, and lifts her off her feet.

A startled shriek breaks from the babe at the rude treatment.

It is all over in a moment.

The bicycle leaps across the rails like a thing of life, Bert swinging the child up before him as they go; and then the rattle and roar of the train is behind them.

"Close call!" mutters Bert, wiping the perspiration—that is not all due to physical exertion—from his brow. "Well, a miss is as good as a mile!"

Though but just out of the jaws of death, his reckless way was with him again.

As soon as the train was passed, he bore the frightened little girl to her mother.

The poor woman could hardly believe her eyes. She could scarcely credit the fact that her child had not gone under the locomotive wheels.

"Oh, Katie, Katie, Katie!" she exclaimed, again and again, pressing the child to her breast.

"Good chance to cut it," muttered Bert, preparing to wheel away. "I don't believe I care for any thanks or fussing over."

But the grateful mother would not have it so. Just as he was about to start, she intercepted him.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "God bless you! God bless you for saving my Katie's life!"

Bert tried to get away, but it was no use. Mrs. Mulcahey, with all an Irish woman's warmth of heart, insisted that he stay and listen to her expressions of gratitude, which she poured in a torrent into his ears.

"Can't ye stay till Denny comes?" she pleaded. "I know he will want to see ye."

"Oh, no; I can't," said Bert, decidedly. "I am going somewhere, and I'm away behind time now. Sorry, but I'll have to be getting along."

"What is yer name, and where are ye goin'?" Shure, I'll have Denny hunt ye up."

"Bert Breeziway, and I'm bound for Forest Heights Academy," was the answer, as our hero sprang upon his wheel and was off.

"I'll have to hurry to make up for lost time," he soliloquized. "This is a trip of events for fair."

Bert had not much remaining of his journey, however. His destination was near.

The thought of this fact turned his mind to a little reflection on events past and present.

Bert Breeziway, it must be confessed, if not already apparent to the reader, was, to a certain extent, what is generally known as a "bad boy."

But his was the badness of mischief and surplus of animal spirits, not of depravity or malice. If his tongue was ready with saucy answers, and his hands busy with practical jokes, he was generous and brave-hearted to a fault, and few knew Bert who did not sincerely like him.

At the time we make his acquaintance Bert was on his way from Shadydale, where his home was, to become a pupil at the academy of Forest Heights.

The reasons for the trip were not exactly to Bert's credit. He had indulged in practical joking to such an extent that he had been compelled to leave the institute in his native town.

His father, having had some previous acquaintance with the principal of the academy in the neighboring village of Forest Heights, some twenty miles away, thereupon selected this school for his son.

Bert himself was nothing loath. He was of a lively disposition, fond of making changes, and Forest Heights gratified his liking.

Such an enthusiastic wheelman as Bert, who had already several century runs to his credit, would, of course, never think of making the trip otherwise than on his "bike." Mr. Breeziway readily agreed to his doing so, for he knew he could trust the boy's promise to go where he wished him to.

Bert was an only child, and the apple of his mother's eye. His

father was a wealthy man, who believed in giving him pretty much what he asked for. So it is small wonder that the boy was considerable of a spoiled child.

After leaving the grateful Mrs. Mulcahey and crossing the railroad track again, he found a gradual ascent before him.

After about a mile was passed, this became more steep, and a half mile farther on he saw facing the road a large establishment he had no doubt was the place for which he was bound.

A large, rambling, old-fashioned building of brick and stone, overrun with ivy and creeping vines, was the main structure.

Near it stood two dwellings of smaller size, the whole being surrounded by a wide, well-kept lawn, while fenced-in fields for sport were visible in the rear.

To make it clear beyond doubt that this was his destination, Bert discovered, cut in the brownstone arch over the door of the building, the legend:

"FOREST HEIGHTS PRIVATE ACADEMY."

"Well, here we are!" he exclaimed. "Can't get out of that; it's a settled fact, like a dead coon. Yonder is my future abode of bliss until—I get fired out."

CHAPTER III.

BERT'S STIRRING ADVENT AT FOREST HEIGHTS.

"I don't think I'll introduce myself to old Larrupp right away," soliloquized Bert. "I want to dawn on him gradually, as it were, so he won't be dazzled with the splendor of my presence. I'll first take a look around a bit, and get the lay of the land."

He was impelled to this decision by the sight of numerous youths and boys occupying themselves with sports and amusements about the grounds.

Suddenly, even while Bert stood watching for a moment, a commotion arose.

"A fight! A fight!" was the excited cry, caught up and repeated on every hand, while the boys began to run toward a common point.

This was in one of the rear fields surrounded by a high board fence.

"A fight, eh?" said Bert. "Well, that just hits me where I live. I reckon I'll have to see the bout."

He walked into the academy grounds, leaned his bicycle against the fence, and entered the field.

At another time the intrusion of the stranger would probably have been resented, but at present every one was so interested in the affair on hand that none paid the slightest heed to Bert, and his movements passed unquestioned.

The participants in the coming combat—for it appeared it had not yet begun—stood facing each other in the center of the field.

One was a strongly-built, thick-set fellow, with a bulldog face. The other was not quite so tall, much slighter in build, and with handsome, refined features.

Bert speedily gained an understanding of the matter from the conversation of the two.

"Yes, Chester," the thick-set youth was saying, "that's me. That's what Bill Bullard is—the boss of this school, and don't you forget it, either!"

"You are a coarse, ruffianly bully!" retorted the slender lad.

"Oh, I am, hey?" exclaimed Bill Bullard, with an ugly look in his eyes. "You'd better keep your mouth shut, or I'll close it for you, and your eye, too! I'm boss here, and when I give you an order, you want to jump to it! I told you to go inside and black my shoes!"

"I know you did, and you'll have to tell me a good many times more before I do it."

"If you don't, it will be bad for you. I'll give you the worst licking you ever had in your life."

"You may pound me to a jelly, but I won't knuckle down to a bully!" declared Chester, with flashing eyes.

"I guess I'll have to give you a licking. Take off your coat, and then look out for yourself."

It was plain to all that the slender-built Chester was no match for the burly Bullard.

Nevertheless, he had begun to take off his coat, when a hand grasped his arm, and arrested the movement.

"Don't bother. Just keep your coat on, and let me lick him for you," said a voice at his elbow.

Chester turned in surprise, wondering who among the apparently unfriendly crowd was willing to take his part. His eyes fell upon Bert Breeziway, whom he had never seen before.

With his usual impetuosity, that erratic young gentleman had decided to take a hand in the encounter.

"I'm death on bullies," he said, meeting Chester's puzzled look with a smile. "Just stand aside, and see how easily I'll polish this one off."

"Who are you?" asked the other.

"Bert Breeziway they call me, as a rule, when they haven't got any little grudge against me, then I receive nice little pet names. Say, just get out of the way, Chet, will you, and let me go for this chip."

"I don't want you to fight my battles," protested Chester.

"I ain't. I just want the first whack at this fellow. You can sail in when I get through, if there is any left."

Chester drew back, pulling his coat on again.

Perhaps he was not so reluctant to accept a substitute, for he could not help seeing that he was no match for the bully.

But the latter did not seem to altogether relish the change, as Bert faced him, with smiling countenance.

"Who are you, anyway?" he snarled.

"Bert Breeziway."

"What are you doing here?"

"Waiting to knock you out."

"You've got no business here. You don't belong to the school."

"Not yet, but I'm going to. I've just ridden in on my bike to join."

"And you want to get into a fight the first thing—even before you've been here ten minutes, eh?"

"I never let a chance go by to lick a bully."

"Say, you're pretty fresh, ain't you?"

"Of course. Don't you like fresh goods?"

"I'll salt you down mighty quick!"

"You'll shed salt tears before you get through."

Though he was a total stranger, Bert's apt replies had already won a good proportion of the boys over to his side. Like all bullies, Bullard was not really popular, though fear caused many of his companions to conceal their dislike while in his presence.

"He's a good one, anyhow," was the general comment, "even if Bull does lick him."

Bullard, seeing he was getting worsted at repartee, now began to pull off his coat, crying, angrily:

"Come on, if you ain't afraid, and I'll wipe up the ground with you! I can lick ten like you!"

"Just wait till you lay out one before you blow," retorted Bert, as he drew off his coat and pitched it to Charlie Chester.

Then he stepped forward, and put his arms in position.

"Now, come right up and get your knockout medicine on the solar plexus, if you want to be up to date!" he cried.

The boys compared the two antagonists with critical eyes.

Bullard was the heavier, and looked the stronger and better man in every respect. Still, Bert's muscles were quite well developed.

But the boys of Forest Heights, who had seen the bully conquer so many stout fellows already, shook their heads.

"He won't be in it at all," they muttered. "Bull will knock him out in one round."

The bully evidently had the same idea himself, for he stepped up to the fray with a confident grin. But Bert was no whit abashed, and promptly took his place.

They sparred for a few moments, and it soon became evident to the others that the new boy was a good hand at boxing.

Suddenly Bullard aimed a hard blow at his mouth. Bert avoided it by stepping nimbly to one side.

After a few more passes, the bully made another attempt. This, too, was neatly dodged. He essayed a third blow, which was blocked.

And then, suddenly, to his unbounded amazement, Bert's fist landed in his eye.

"Oh!" cried Bullard, more from surprise than pain, though it was evident that the blow had given him a black eye.

It had also made him very savage, and he set to work to even up things in grim earnest.

The blows were rained thick, fast and furious at Bert. But they were all evaded by nimble ducking and dodging, cleverly stopped, or, if one did now and then chance to reach its mark, it was merely in a light, glancing manner that inflicted no damage.

For every punch he received, Bert managed to get in two on his adversary. But they were too light to do serious injury.

"The fellow is only a boxer. When it comes to a fight, he ain't there. He can't hit Bull hard enough to hurt him," was the general comment.

"Bah! Those are only baby taps," he sneered. "Why don't you give me one I can feel?"

"Certainly; anything to oblige," retorted Bert, and his fist came in contact with the other's nose so forcibly that a crimson stream began to flow.

"First blood for Breeziway!" cried Chester. "Hurrah for our man! He'll lick him yet!"

He was delighted with the show his champion was making.

The consciousness that he had gained a bloody nose, in addition to a black eye, while unable to inflict anything like a similar degree of punishment on his opponent, made Bullard fairly frantic.

His temper became so inflamed that he lost all control of himself.

"Curse you! Take that, and that!" he shouted, rushing forward and striking furiously at Bert, with first one hand and then the other.

Our hero met the onslaught calmly, coolly warding off the blows and watching with the eye of a lynx for his chance, which he knew must come now in a minute.

Suddenly he saw it, and his right fist shot forward with terrible force, and caught Bullard just at the end of the breast-bone.

The effect was instantaneous. The bully stopped short in his tracks, threw up his arms, staggered a little, reeled forward, then collapsed and fell to the ground. He was too dazed to get up again.

As for Bert, he merely cast one glance at his vanquished foe, to make sure he had settled him. Then he turned and faced the amazed boys of Forest Heights Academy.

"There you are!" he announced, with a lordly sweep of his arm. "Just as I told you, right on the solar plexus. That's the way all the champions knock their man out nowadays."

CHAPTER IV.

WHO IT WAS THE BULL TOSSED.

"There's your champion gamecock—only a dunghill fowl, when you come to size him up right," said Bert. "Well, has any fellow got any remark to make?"

For a moment there was no response. The boys of Forest Heights Academy stood gazing in silence from the prostrate form of the bully, who had tyrannized over them so long, but was now overthrown forever, to the laughing face of the conqueror.

Bert returned their still half-comprehending glances with a quizzical look.

"Don't be a clam," he remarked. "What have you got to say?"

"Three cheers for Bert Breeziway, the new champion of Forest Heights!" is what I've got to say!" cried Charlie Chester, impulsively. "Take the word from me, fellows. Now, then, hip, hip—"

"Hurray, hurray, hurray!" cried the boys, giving the newcomer the greeting that was his due, with all the strength of their lungs.

Then the ice was broken, and Bert found himself at home in less time than it takes to tell it.

He was the hero of the day. Bullard presently came to his senses, but he received small notice, save at the hands of his satellites and toadies.

His star had fallen, and Bert's was in the ascendant. Seeing how matters stood, the bully, with his sycophants at his heels, skulked away, inwardly vowing vengeance upon the author of his downfall.

Presently the big bell of Forest Heights gave two resounding clangs, and the boys began to pass into the building.

"Come on in with me," said Charlie. "I'll steer you through all right till the doc takes you in tow."

"How about my bike?"

"I'll show you where to put that."

His wheel attended to, Bert followed Charlie into a large room, furnished with desks and seats.

It was evidently a class-room. At the front end of the apartment, on a raised platform, was the desk of the tutor.

It was at present vacant, a fact which seemed to cause some

astonishment to the class. Little murmurs of surprise ran about the room.

"What's the matter with the doc?"

"The old man is late for once."

"Funny; never knew that to happen before."

"Neither did I. He's generally as punctual as time and tide, which wait for no man."

These remarks continued for a few moments, when there was a sudden cessation.

"Here he is now."

"The doc's on deck."

"No, it ain't the doc, either; it's Swain."

Through a door at the front end of the room a man had entered, and advanced to the tutor's desk.

It was evident, however, that he was not the person the boys had been expecting. His first words were to that effect.

"Dr. Larrupp is unavoidably absent," he remarked. "I cannot account for it, as he has always been at his post before. However, the doctor is punctuality itself, and will, doubtless, be here shortly. As this is but a short session of the class, I will conduct the recitations, pending his arrival. Now—ah, whom have we here?"

The last remark was called forth by our hero's having suddenly stood up in his place.

"You are Mr. Swain?" he said.

"I am."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm Bert Breeziway, a candidate for Forest Heights Academy membership. In other words, a new scholar, just ridden in. Hope we shall hitch all right."

"Hitch?"

"Yes—like each other, you know. Always like to feel that people are fond of me."

"Hum!" said Mr. Swain, hardly knowing what to make of Bert's assurance. The boy's face bore such a solemn expression, it was hard to believe he was making sport of him.

Several of the boys laughed broadly, and the master said, sharply:

"You mustn't talk that way."

"No? How am I to talk, then?" asked Bert, in apparent perplexity. "Not in the sign language, surely? I haven't been through the deaf and dumb alphabet yet."

"I mean you must be more respectful."

"Yes, sir. I'm a full team of respect."

"Well," the tutor began, when there was a startling interruption.

Through the door by which he had entered rushed another man—and such a man!

The black suit in which his slender, elongated form was clad was rent in several places, and covered with mud, not yet dried, from head to foot. There was a bump almost the size of an egg on his right temple.

"The doc!" exclaimed the boys, in one voice.

"Why, Dr. Larrupp," began Mr. Swain, surveying his employer's plight in dismay, "whatever—"

But in no measure did the sentiments of the others approach the consternation that seized upon Bert Breeziway. Too well he recognized the newcomer.

That tall form and thin face! The unhappy wretch he had chased with his bicycle downhill—chased him into the field, whence a bull had tossed him into a pool of filthy water! Now the arbiter of his fate!

The last thought was enough for Bert. Already he felt in anticipation the sting of the sound caning he knew he would surely receive at the outraged master's hands.

"Oh, I'm in for it, sure!" he murmured.

He had known the principal at first glance, and the recognition was mutual.

Raising his hand, the doctor pointed at Bert, who, in the excitement, had forgotten to sit down, and cried, excitedly:

"There he is—there he is! That's the boy!"

"Yis, that's the b'y, begorra! Faith, that's him—that's the b'y!" echoed a voice.

And the Irish laborer whom Bert's bicycle had also forced into a lively sprint down the hill burst through the door by which the doctor had just entered.

The scapegrace's two victims confronted him, bent on vengeance.

"Both of them!" groaned Bert. "This is worse and more of it! Oh, I am a goner now for fair! They'll simply skin me alive!"

CHAPTER V.

DENNY MULCAHEY IN FIGHTING MOOD.

"Pardon me, Dr. Larrupp," said Mr. Swain, "but I am all at sea. I cannot make head or tail of this affair."

"The whole head and tail of it, sir," rejoined the doctor, emphatically, "is that boy—that boy is a despicable young scoundrel!"

"He is?" queried Mr. Swain.

"Of course he is! Look at me—am I not a pretty sight?" fairly shouted the master.

"Um—er—your clothing seems a little soiled," answered the subordinate, who did not know what kind of reply he was expected to make.

"Soiled! I should say it was soiled! It is positively encrusted with mud. And for my condition that young scamp is responsible!"

He pointed at Bert, and Mr. Swain looked properly horrified at the sight of such youthful depravity.

"He chased me downhill upon a bicycle! He set an infuriated bull upon me! He caused me to be tossed in the air so violently that it is a wonder there is a single sound bone in my body. He had me thrown into a very sink-hole of slime—a veritable quicksand of mud—from which I was unable to escape until after what seemed hours of agony! He has made me a mock, a byword, a thing of ridicule, a laughing-stock—I, Dr. Pythagoras Larrupp! I, a man of high learning and attainments made a—fool!"

The wrathful doctor hurled out the last word like a thunder-bolt, with which he would crush Bert forever.

That young gentleman was quite undismayed by the torrent of words, however. The might of the principal's arm had more awe for him than the weight of his tongue.

"Young man," said Dr. Larrupp, forcing himself into momentary calmness by a great effort, as he turned to Bert, "what is your name?"

"Bert Breeziway, sir."

"Ah, indeed! I had a letter from your father a few days since. He is an old friend of mine, by the way. In his letter he wished to know if I approved of corporal punishment. I informed him that I did, whereupon he wrote me that he should like to have his son admitted to Forest Heights Academy. One thing you will bear in mind, young man—I approve of corporal punishment."

"Oh, that's all right," said Bert, easily. "Don't put yourself to any extra trouble on my account. I'm no corporal. Just consider me a plain private."

"Your facetious remarks will do you no good. Mr. Swain, will you have the kindness to fetch me in half a dozen stout canes? Master Breeziway, remove your coat."

"I'd rather not," said Bert. "I have a very delicate constitution, and might catch cold."

"You will catch something very different, and be warm enough presently," said the doctor, significantly.

At this moment Mr. Swain returned, with several canes, and Dr. Larrupp selected one.

"Take off your coat, sir," he again ordered, sternly.

Suddenly the Irish laborer took a hand in the matter.

He had heretofore remained silent, standing in the background, and watching events with rather a puzzled air.

But now stepping to the front, he demanded, quickly:

"Faith, an' phwat will he take off his coat for?"

"So that I may punish him as he deserves," returned Dr. Larrupp, impatiently, and hardly looking at the Irishman, of whom, in his excitement, he had not taken any especial notice.

"Take off your coat!" he repeated, sternly, to Bert.

"Take off his coat, is it? Whoop! Hurroo! Shure, an' it's mesilf that'll do the takin' off!" cried the Irishman, with a yell that startled the doctor almost out of his senses.

He pulled off the garment in question and threw it on the floor. Then he doubled up his fists, and, while executing an impromptu war dance, went through pantomimic motions of punching the principal's head.

"Whoop! Hurroo! Come on, till I bate the head off av ye! Punish him as he deserves, is it? Faith, an' Dinny Mulcahey will have a worruld to say about that!"

"Wh—wh—what?" stammered Dr. Larrupp, recoiling before the advance of Bert's unexpected champion.

"Come on, ye spalpeen! Ye'll bate the b'y, will ye? Ye'll put a cane on his back? Oh, ye villain of the worruld, jest let me hit ye wanst!"

He shoved a huge, grimy fist under the doctor's nose, and the latter sprang back with such suddenness that he tripped.

The result was that he went sprawling upon all fours on the floor in a very undignified attitude.

The sight was too much for the boys, who burst into a roar of laughter.

The doctor got upon his feet, his face very red.

"Are you hurt, sir?" asked Mr. Swain.

"No, I am not physically injured," was the reply, "but I am considerably perplexed. My good man, will you kindly explain what interest you have in this young—er—reprobate?"

"Phwat is it? Young phwat?"

"Reprobate, I said."

"Reprobate yesilf it is, ye ould spalpeen!" cried Mr. Mulcahey, indignantly. "Don't ye be afther callin' him names, or I'll blacken the eyes av ye. It's a young gintleman he is."

"Yes, yes," hurriedly acquiesced the doctor, keeping a wary eye on his restless foe. "What interest have you in him? Why do you object to his being punished?"

"Faith, d'ye think I'd be afther lettin' ye lay a shtick on the back of the b'y that saved me little girl's loife?"

The words created a sensation in the class.

Bert was almost as much surprised as any one. It was evident, he now realized, that, by a strange chance, the Irish laborer he had chased down hill was the father of the child he had saved from death.

As for Dr. Larrupp, he looked thunderstruck.

"He—did that?" he ejaculated.

"He did, begorra!" exclaimed Denny Mulcahey. "There was me little girl playin' roight in the middle of the track, and there was the cars a-rushin' down. An' there was me poor woife just crazy wid fright, but too far away to do anything."

"An' at that moment who comes in soight but this young gent."

"Then, faith," continued the grateful father, "he shoots roight down in front of the engine, an' me woife thinks he's gone for sure. The train goes on, an' when it's past there he is on the other side, begorra, an' the nixt minute he has our little Katie in her mother's arms!"

"Hurrah!" cried three or four of the boys, impulsively.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" cried others, and the cry was taken up until the room rang with it, despite the efforts of the masters to quell the noise.

"An' do ye think I'd let ye bate that b'y now? Shure, he saved me little girl's loife, begorra! an' I'll bate the head off any wan that lays a finger on him!"

Mr. Mulcahey threw himself into a fighting attitude again. It was very evident that he was in earnest and would do just as he said.

But Dr. Larrupp was not paying as much heed to him as before. His eyes were fixed on Bert, who during the recital of his heroism had got as red as a peony with embarrassment, and was now standing with his eyes fixed on the floor.

The doctor quietly laid aside the cane he had selected. When he spoke, it was in an altered tone of voice:

"I think we had better remit the punishment altogether," he said. "I guess there is more in Bert Breeziway than I thought there was. Much may be overlooked in a boy who is enough of a hero to imperil his own life to save that of a little child. Bert, we will cry a truce for the present."

He extended his hand, and our hero clasped it, feeling that he should like Dr. Larrupp, after all.

"Let me have yer hand, too, me b'y!" exclaimed Denny Mulcahey, clasping the boy's fingers in the grip of a vise. "God bless ye, me b'y, is the prayer of Biddy an' mesilf. We don't forget that but for ye we should have wet eyes an' heavy hearts an' a little coffin in the house this day. Remember, Denny Mulcahey is yer friend, an' if ye iver want anything of him ye can have it, aven if it's the last dhrop of his blood!"

He squeezed Bert's hand again, as a proof of his earnestness, and then turning away, went out the door.

The class being dismissed a few moments later, the boys

thronged about Bert, to congratulate him on his exploit, and made the air resound with such shouts as:

"Breeziway forever!"

"Hurrah for the hero of Forest Heights!"

CHAPTER VI.

HUNGRY HANK, OF THE "SONS OF REST."

"There goes Bullard," said Bert. "Did you see that scowl he favored me with? Say, he loves me already, don't he?"

"He will try to pay you out to-night, I have no doubt, when they haze you," returned Charlie Chester.

It was about half an hour later than the events described in the last chapter, and the two had strolled aside from the others for a little chat.

They had been mutually attracted, and each in his mind had already settled upon the other for a chum.

The defeated bully and two or three of his cronies had just walked past them, and the side glance Bullard cast was full of hatred and menace.

"Hello!" exclaimed Bert. "So they believe in hazing at Forest Heights, do they?"

"The doc don't, but the fellows do, and they always manage to have their way. It's one of the time-honored customs of the place."

"Do you know, I have a constitutional objection to being hazed."

"Don't see how you are going to help yourself," said Chester, with a shrug of his shoulders. "They'll be sure to tackle you to-night, a half dozen of them, at the least."

Bert looked meditative.

"I wonder where I am going to sleep? They haven't told me yet."

"But they have me. They told me two days ago, when it was decided you were coming," said Chester, promptly. "You are going to room with me. There are two fellows, with a bed apiece for them, in each room, and my second bed happens to be unoccupied, so I scoop you in. Hope you have no objections?"

"None in the world, old man. I like you, and prefer you for a roommate to any other fellow in the place. But, now, about this hazing?"

"Of course, if you want to make a fight, I'm with you, tooth and toenail," said Charlie. "But I don't think we can count on any outside help. You see, every chap has had a taste of it, and he wants the new ones to get the same dose, just for satisfaction."

"I see," said Bert. "That's only human nature. But, now, let me get my wits to work. There ought to be some easier way of outwitting these fellows than by tackling them single-handed."

They walked along a short distance in silence. Our hero's brows were knit in deep perplexity.

Suddenly there dawned upon their vision the figure of a tramp, reclining by the roadside.

He was a striking representative of the worthless vagabond type. His clothes were ragged, ill-fitting and dirty.

His bare toes peeped through the tips of his shoes, and a battered stovepipe hat surmounted his head.

His face was half covered with a matted beard, and his nose, particularly the tip, was as shining and red as a ruby. Perhaps a partial explanation of its appearance lay in the old tomato can suspended from his shoulders by a string.

When Bert caught sight of this worthy gentleman, he gave him a thorough survey, taking especial note of the herculean frame and brawny limbs the fags incased.

And in looking at the tramp he caught an inspiration.

The first intimation Chester had of anything unusual was on receiving a powerful slap between the shoulders that almost knocked him down.

"I've got it, Charlie!" cried Bert. "I've got the idea!"

"What is it?" asked Charlie, eagerly.

"See that tramp?"

"Yes."

"Take a good look at him. Notice how big he is, and what a pile of strength there must be in that lazy carcass of his."

"I see."

"Well, say, suppose he should happen to be in bed instead of me when those fellows come in to-night?"

Chester looked at his chum questioningly for a moment before he saw the point. Then he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Strikes you all right, eh?" asked Bert, smiling.

"Tiptop! Provided you can work it."

"We'll know in a minute. Let's see what his nibs has to say."

The tramp was still asleep, as he had been when they first discovered him, reclining upon his back, and making the air resonant with a not exactly musical snore.

Bert caught him by the shoulder, and shook him vigorously.

"Change cars for Chicago!" he cried. "Look out, pard; here comes the brakeman, and he'll fire you off."

The tramp sat bolt upright, with a start.

"The blazes he will! I'll— Hello! I thought I was stealing a ride on a freight. What did you wake me fer?" he demanded, with a scowl, as he saw Bert.

"Easy, Weary Willie; don't get riled. I just wanted to present you with a quarter," said that diplomatic young gentleman, holding out a coin of the denomination mentioned.

The tramp grabbed it, set it between his teeth to test its genuineness, and then stared at Bert.

"Wot fer?" he ejaculated.

"Oh, for fun," said Bert. "Use it to pay your dues in the Sons of Rest."

"Aw, wot are yer givin' us?" demanded the worthy wayfarer, contemptuously.

"Say," said Bert, abruptly, "do you want to make a dollar?"

"Wot at—work?" queried the tramp, cautiously.

"No; just for sleeping in a good, nice, soft bed for to-night."

"Aw, yer givin' me a gag!"

"No; that's straight; it's a joke."

"The bed's full er tacks, er pricklers, ter stick me? That's the joke, hey?"

"No; the bed's all right. The joke ain't on you, but somebody else. What do you say? It's an easy chance to scoop in a hundred cents."

The tramp reflected a moment.

"I'll go yer," he said. "But remember, if yer up to any games, Hungry Hank—that's me—will take it out er yer hides! Where's the bed?"

"Up there in one of the rooms of the academy," returned Bert, indicating the school building, which stood at quite a little distance away. "We'll sneak out and meet you here after dark and pilot you in."

The final details of the plan were arranged, and then the boys went back to the academy to supper.

After this meal there was an hour of study, at the expiration of which they were at liberty to occupy themselves as they pleased until half-past nine, when all retired for the night.

Bert and Chester sought their room, with the others, but not to sleep. They waited until all was quiet, when they stole out and let in their ragged henchman.

This exploit was accomplished without mishap, and soon Hungry Hank was stretched upon the softest couch his limbs had known for years.

The boys took the remaining bed, the two lying together.

They did not go to sleep, but lay waiting, with every sense on the alert.

The time dragged along on leaden wings. One, two, almost three hours had passed, when their vigil was rewarded.

There was a significant noise outside the door.

"There they are!" murmured Chester.

"Yes," said Bert, "and now look out for fun!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAZERS WHO WERE HAZED.

Bert Breeziway and Charlie Chester lay still as mice when the cat is near, listening intently for a second suspicious sound to indicate the advent of the hazers.

"Ah! Did you hear that?" breathed Chester, suddenly.

Bert nodded; his eyes were twinkling with fun.

A significant noise had reached their ears from just without the door of the bedroom.

Bert was as cool and unconcerned as possible, while Chester was hardly able to contain himself with suppressed excitement.

As for Hungry Hank, that weary wayfarer lay in the sleep of the innocent, oblivious of all that occurred.

The chums, keeping their eyes fixed on the door, saw it cautiously pushed open. First one and then another figure appeared on the threshold.

The hazers had sprung from their beds and hastily donned part of their clothing, as soon as they judged the night was sufficiently advanced to insure them against interruption.

Now they filed stealthily forward, looking like specters in the dim light of the room.

They were six in number, each with a rudely-made mask of black cloth tied over his face to conceal his identity.

"Well, fellows, here we are, and the coast is clear."

It was the leader who spoke, and, despite an evident attempt to alter his voice, the chums easily recognized Bullard, the bully.

"Where is the victim?" queried the second night-rover.

"Right here; this first bed," replied Bullard.

"Sure that's the right one?"

"Sure. I ain't making any mistake. I made inquiries to-day, and found out from a reliable party just where that fresh kid was going to sleep. This is the bed, all right."

The couch on which the virtuous Hungry Hank reclined was the one he indicated. At sound of the assurance in his voice, the chums could not repress a smile.

Their own bed was more in one corner of the room, where the shadows were thicker, and on that account none of the hazers noticed that it contained two forms instead of one.

"He's sound asleep," commented one.

"Yes," assured Bullard. "Come, all lay hold of the covers and pull them off. We'll yank him out of that nice, snug snooze in a hurry."

Bert and Chester were almost strangling with suppressed laughter.

The hazers ranged themselves about the bed, and seized hold of the coverlet.

At a signal from Bullard, it was roughly jerked off, and the sheets followed.

Quilts or blankets there were none, it being a warm, summer night.

The tramp now lay clad only in shirt and drawers.

Yet still the hazers did not discover that he was other than their intended victim. Such an idea was so far from their minds that their own lack of suspicion blinded them.

Hungry Hank continued his peaceful slumber, undisturbed by the attentions of which he was the mistaken subject.

"Hang him! Will he never wake up?" growled Bullard. "He sleeps like a log. Grab hold of his ankles and give them a good jerk. Two of you be ready to clap your hands over his mouth, in case he sets up a yell."

His followers carried out the instructions to the letter.

Bullard and another on one side of the bed and a second couple on the other seized the sleeper's ankles and gave them a vigorous jerk.

The result was all they could have desired—even more, in fact.

The tramp started bolt upright in bed.

He had been in the middle of a dream of stealing a ride on a freight train. He had just reached a point where a brakeman was about to hurl him from the top of a car while the train was running at full speed, when he was so rudely awakened.

What more natural than that he should confound the waking with the sleeping, and in his half-confused state of mind think it was all part of the same thing?

"No, you don't!" he cried, angrily. "Fire Hungry Hank off? I guess not! Take that!"

His movements were like lightning, for he believed safety depended upon quickness.

Drawing his feet up as far as possible, he shot them out again like catapults.

The right struck one of the hazers, with the force of a battering ram, squarely in the stomach, and doubled him up like a jack-knife. The left foot caught another on the chin, sending his teeth together with a snap that made him bite his tongue and howl with pain.

"Fire Hungry Hank off!" cried that indignant gentleman. "I guess you won't sling him off the top of no moving train! I kin lick any brakeman this side of hades! I am a terror, an' they don't never want to tackle me more'n once! Fire Hungry Hank, hey? Take that, an' that!"

He doubled up his big fists, and, with his mind's eye transforming the boys into a horde of assaulting brakemen, he leaped among them.

The luckless would-be hazers were so paralyzed with surprise and terror at the amazing turn of affairs that they were unable to flee.

Biff! Chug! Whack!

One fellow caught a brawny fist in the eye. Another got it on the jaw.

A third caught a blow on the ear that made his head ring.

Then the fourth turned and ran for dear life. It was Bullard himself.

"No, yer don't! Yer don't git away! Not much yer don't git away from Hungry Hank!"

Thoroughly warmed to his work, the tramp dashed after the leader of the hazers.

Bullard bolted through the doorway and dashed down the hall toward the stairs.

Hungry Hank was at his heels.

"Come on!" cried Bert, springing out of bed. "Let's see the sport."

They ran out into the hall, and watched the chase.

Bullard reached the head of the stairs. The tramp was just behind him.

"Fire me off, hey, will yer?" he cried. "Fire off Hungry Hank? I'll give you a kick-off yer won't forgit!"

He raised his foot and gave the bully a tremendous kick just as he balanced on the top step of the stair.

"Oh, oh! Help! murder! fire!" cried that wretched youth.

The force of the kick lifted him clean off his feet and sent him flying head-first down the stairs.

The two boys watching fairly hugged themselves with glee.

"He'll haze me some more!" said Bert.

"Oh, say, ain't it a circus!" gurgled Chester.

"Help, murder! murder!" howled Bullard again.

Then there were sudden ejaculations in a new voice, the thump of two bodies coming into violent contact and the added noise of another form rolling down the steps.

"Dear me! Bless my soul! Oh, what— Help!" cried the voice of the unknown.

"Great Saltpetre!" gasped Bert. "Bull has gone plum into somebody coming up the stairs!"

"Yes," groaned Chester, "and there'll be the mischief to pay. Do you know who it is?"

"No."

"It's the doc!"

"Oh, murder!"

"What are we going to do? We're caught dead to rights. Here's Hungry Hank, and everything! We're in for it sure."

"Not yet, old man. Never say die! Pull your mug down straight, and trust to me to get you out of the scrape."

With these words Bert advanced and directed his attention to the tumult at the bottom of the stairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

BULLARD PAYS THE PIPER.

Hungry Hank stood at the head of the stairs with a puzzled expression on his face. It was evident that he had but just become thoroughly awake.

"What's the matter with you, anyhow?" asked Bert.

"Say, did I sling that gang of brakemen off the top of the car, sure enough?" queried the wayfarer.

"No, but you slung around a gang of fellows who came to haze my chum and me. You're handy to have 'round, Hungry. You've just fired the last one downstairs, plum into the principal of the school, knocking him heels over head, too."

"Oh, Lordy, I'm goin' ter slope!" groaned the tramp, his customary assurance totally knocked to pieces by the recital of his midnight ravages. "Say, hand over that case you were goin' ter gimme."

"Case? What case? You're a tough enough case yourself."

"None o' yer funny biz!" growled the hungry one. "Gimme the plunk, the century, the long green."

"Oh, you mean that dollar, eh? Well, you don't suppose I carry it around in my nightshirt, do you? My chum will fix you up all right. Here, Chet, go back to the room and get a dollar out of my clothes to reward this Son of Rest for his noble exertions to-night in our behalf."

Chester and the wayfarer hurried to the bedroom, where the

former hastily extracted a bill from Bert's trousers pocket—as it happened he had not the amount in his own—and handed it to the tramp, who made off in short order.

Then Chester hurried away to see how Bert was making out.

That young gentleman, ready of wit as usual, had made good use of his time.

Rushing down the stairs to where the principal and Bullard lay in a tangled heap at the bottom, he exclaimed, effusively:

"Oh, Dr. Larrupp! Oh, what a shame! I am so sorry. Here, let me help you up, please, sir!"

He extended his hand and assisted the doctor to his feet, at the same time contriving to bestow several sly kicks on the bully.

"Wh—what does this mean?" demanded the principal, with a half-dazed air.

Well might the good man feel lost in amazement at the scene before him. The uproar had by this time aroused the greater part of the students, who, clad in their nightshirts, came rushing from their rooms to ascertain the cause.

The first objects upon which their eyes rested were the discomfited hazers, who were indeed in a sorry way—one trying to stop the flow from a bleeding nose, another nursing a black eye, a third tenderly feeling of a big lump on the head.

The young man who had received the tramp's foot in his stomach was lying on the floor, all doubled up and trying to gasp back into his body some of the breath that had been so summarily knocked out of it.

But the most wretched of the lot was Bullard. As he arose to his feet and painfully ascended the stairs it seemed as though the erstwhile autocrat of the school contained in his single person all the injuries distributed among his companions, with still more in addition.

There was a red stream from his nostrils, a blue swelling of his closed eyelid, a cut upon his temple, a limp to his walk, and hardly a portion of his body that was not bruised in some manner. The young ruffian had received with interest the dose he would have meted out to another.

"Well, I de—clare!" gasped the doctor, as his gaze rested upon this startling apparition. "Am I awake or dreaming? Bullard—what—does—this—mean?"

The bully opened his swollen lips, and, forgetting in his vindictiveness how the truth would incriminate himself, blurted out:

"He had a man in his room and he threw me downstairs."

"Who had?"

"Breeziway," answered the young ruffian, shooting a venomous glance at our hero.

"Breeziway? I don't understand. What were you boys—one, two, four, six of you, doing in Breeziway's room?"

This was a poser.

But before the discomfited bully could frame a reply there came light from an unexpected source.

Instead of pity, Bullard's condition awakened only amusement among the boys. They had all, at one time or another, been the victim of his overbearing ways. Now, as they saw the new predicament he had gotten into, a loud laugh rang out, and some one exclaimed, derisively:

"Oh, say, Bull! You put the new boy through fine, didn't you?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Dr. Larrupp, quick as a flash. "I think I comprehend. This, then, is another of those reprehensible attempts at hazing that I have determined to put a stop to."

The doctor shut his lips tightly together. The subject was a sore spot with him.

"But, sir—" began Bullard.

"Not a word! Not a syllable! I will settle with you boys to-morrow. There shall be a public example made of you."

"But Breeziway had a man in his room," persisted the bully, anxious to get our hero into trouble, out of pure spite!

"Not a word! I will not listen! Go to your room!" ordered the principal, peremptorily, with a wave of his hand. "Boys, you will all return to your beds. Breeziway, I am glad you foiled this high-handed attempt."

"Thank you, sir," said Bert, with his accustomed modesty. "I did my little prettiest."

The students retired to their rooms, and in a few moments the hallway was again deserted.

Once they were by themselves, Chester fairly hugged Bert with delight at the outcome of the affair.

"Oh, wasn't it just boss!" he said. "Bull got all the hard knocks, and now he's going to get walloped by the doc in the bargain."

"I never expected the doc to come along just then," rejoined our hero.

"Neither did Bull, and that's just where he slipped up. But the old man has a way of taking a midnight stroll through the building once in a while to see for himself that everything is all right, and he just happened to take the notion to-night. I guess it's your luck. You always fall on your feet."

Bert's only answer was a laugh, and the conversation ended. Both jumped into the one bed again—neither caring to lie in the place of the departed Hungry Hank until there had been a change of sheets.

They were soon asleep, and did not awake until morning.

Chester's remark that Bullard would "get walloped" proved prophetic. Before the exercises for the day began the six hazers were called to the front, read a severe lecture and then soundly caned by the doctor, who, despite their lusty bellowing, did not desist until his arm was wearied.

The bully's cup of gall was filled to the brim. The consequence was a bitter hatred of Bert and an inward vow to do him a bad turn at the first opportunity.

"You want to look out for him, Breeziway," was the repeated warning our hero received from first one and then another. "He's a nasty fellow to have down on you. Don't give him half a chance or he'll get you foul."

But Bert only laughed at it all, and said, in his reckless way:

"Oh, I guess not! I shan't let it scare me out of over two years' growth, anyway."

Little either he or the bully dreamed what strange events the power to foresee the future would have revealed, or how strangely their lives were to be interwoven for good and ill.

CHAPTER IX.

RIDING BLACK DEMON.

"Say, look here, Breeziway, you said you could ride any horse that ever stepped."

"H'm! I don't know about that."

"Oh, do you want to back out, then?"

"I haven't done any backing out yet. What are you trying to get at?"

The scene was the grounds of Forest Heights Academy, and the time during the recreation hour.

The speakers were Bert and a boy named Dunton. Chester and several others were interested listeners to the dispute.

"What I am trying to get at," said Dunton, "is just this: I know of a horse that I'll bet you can't ride."

"What one is it?"

"His name is Black Demon, and he belongs to a man up the road named Barker."

"Oh, no!" cried several of the other boys; "not Black Demon!"

"It ain't fair to bring him in, Dunt."

"Of course not; nobody could ride him."

"Oh, well," said Dunton, "Breeziway is a big exception to the common run, you know. He can do anything. Besides, he's been blowing around here till I got sick and thought I would like to take him down a bit."

He spoke in a most disagreeable manner and with a palpable sneer.

Dunton was an intimate and follower of Bullard. He resented Bert's overthrow of his leader, and, on that account, was anxious to make him seem small if possible.

"Well, I didn't say I couldn't ride Black Demon," Bert remarked, placidly.

"You don't dare to come down and do it," said Dunton.

"Lead the way and I'll fill your footsteps, old Know-it-all," was the prompt reply.

Accordingly they started off up the road, attended by a large following.

The news that Bert Breeziway was going to attempt to ride the unmanageable Black Demon caused a sensation at once. Not a fellow that heard but dropped whatever he was doing to go down and witness the sight.

Bullard went along, his eyes sparkling with malicious glee. That his enemy would be maimed for life, if not killed, in case he made the trial, he had not the slightest doubt. He knew Black Demon.

The dangerous task before him, for it now seemed assured that

he would undertake the feat, did not excite Bert or cause him to lose his wits in the least. Before getting beyond the confines of the academy grounds he turned back and secured his bicycle, an example which was unanimously followed—as all had wheels—and soon the entire party was pedaling instead of walking up the road.

About a mile from the academy was the home of Mr. Jason Barker, the owner of Black Demon. This gentleman was proprietor and manager of the Barker House, a road hostelry which was very well patronized, especially in summer, by tourists from the cities stopping at Forest Heights.

The owner of the hotel himself was standing on the stoop as the bicycle cavalcade came up the road.

The hotel-keeper was tall and lank, with a face clean-shaven save for a bunch of whiskers on his chin. He was a genuine Down-Easter in all but his speech; there were no Yankeeisms in that.

"Well, boys?" he said, interrogatively, as the bicycle host came to a halt before the hotel and each fellow slipped off his wheel.

"Mr. Barker, we've got something for you," said Dunton. "Here's a fellow wants to ride Black Demon."

He pointed Bert.

"Well, he can't ride him."

"Why not?"

"In the first place, the horse wouldn't let him. In the second, I don't care to be responsible to Dr. Larrupp for the death of one of his boys. Again, the brute would be almost certain to injure some one else and might even fatally injure himself. I don't care to take any risks with such a valuable piece of horseflesh," concluded Mr. Barker, in a tone of decision.

Bert put his voice in for the first time.

"I'd like to have a try at him. I wouldn't hurt the horse."

"No; but he'd hurt you," said Mr. Barker, grimly. "There he is now! Just look at him and then tell me you want to ride that brute."

A hostler was just leading a magnificent coal-black steed out of the stable.

The animal was prancing about, rearing up on his hind legs and striving to jerk free the rope by which the man held him.

"He's a beauty!" exclaimed Bert, looking at the horse with admiring eyes.

The beast's appearance certainly justified the words. Clean-limbed and shapely, with delicate nostrils and proudly-arching neck, he looked the thoroughbred.

"Well, have you changed your mind about wanting to ride Black Demon?" queried Mr. Barker.

"Not at all; I don't change," said our hero. "I'm open to the job if you will give me leave to try."

"Well, I most certainly will not. The brute is as much a demon as his name implies, and for you to attempt to ride him would be simply suicidal. I will not be a party to any such foolhardy business."

Barker spoke very decidedly, and when he had concluded he turned and entered the hotel, as though he wished it to be understood that the matter was settled for good.

The boys stood looking at the horse as he shifted about uneasily under the hostler's attentions, and turning the thing over in their minds. Presently Dunton said:

"Well, why don't you jump on his back? What are you waiting for?"

"Mr. Barker's permission. He says I can't have it."

"Bah! A poor excuse is better than none, ain't it? The fact is, you are afraid to tackle the horse."

Dunton drew back in haste. He recollected that he was talking to the person who had conquered Bullard.

It was one of Bert's weaknesses that he could not take a dare.

"As for riding the nag," he said, "I'll show you how much afraid I am to do it."

He edged his way up to the steed until he was just alongside him. Then he made a spring.

An outburst of exclamations rent the air. The reckless boy was upon Black Demon's back.

The beast at once threw his head up so sharply that the rope was torn from the hostler's hand. He made a dash to get out of the way of the angry brute.

Black Demon reared straight up on his hind legs.

Our hero stuck to his place like a fly on the side of a house.

The horse threw himself down and rolled over upon first one side, then the other. But Bert was prepared for him, and by

nimbly leaping up each time, managed to escape these attempts to injure him.

"Look out, Breeziway, look out!" cried some of the students. "He's getting uglier every minute."

The shouts caught the attention of Mr. Barker, who came rushing out to see what they meant. He stopped, horrified at the scene before his eyes.

To heighten his dismay, Black Demon at that moment rushed wildly away up the road, tearing along with furious gallops and apparently heedless of how or where he went.

CHAPTER X.

ONE LIFE LOST, AND ALMOST TWO.

On and on dashed Black Demon, tireless as the wind apparently, and almost as fleet, annihilating distance with flying hoofs.

"Oh, I tell you, we are just moving!" exclaimed Bert.

He did not, however, permit his exaltation to cause him to relax his vigilant attention to the steed.

He realized that Black Demon had not been conquered yet, and he was far too uncertain a quality to be trusted.

It was well that Bert kept his wits about him, for several times the horse shied violently, in a vicious endeavor to unseat him.

On such occasions Bert retaliated with the rope's end, whipping the brute sharply.

At length Black Demon began to grow exhausted. He had covered considerable ground and at a terrific pace. Moreover, the figure upon his back still stuck there as persistently as ever, and it began to dawn upon him that he had found his master.

With this realization Bert's battle was won.

He turned the horse about, and Black Demon showed no objection to taking the back track. In due time our hero galloped triumphantly into the presence of his amazed schoolmates and the astonished Mr. Barker.

"Hello, people!" he called, gayly. "Got back the same day, you see."

The faces of his hearers were a study. Amazement and gratification, and in a few cases chagrin, were the expressions that chased one another away.

"You did it, Bert!" called Chester. "Bully for you!"

"Three cheers for Bert Breeziway!" shouted Morris.

"They had you killed already, Bert," said another.

"Well, I'll be shot if it don't just beat all!" exclaimed Mr. Barker, coming forward and surveying his steed critically. "I never expected to see you alive again, young man, for I thought Black Demon would settle you as sure as fate. You have certainly got lots of pluck, and wonderful luck as well."

"Oh, a little, maybe," laughed Bert.

He leaped from the horse's back, keeping one end of the rope still in his grasp.

The spirited animal, relieved of his rider, at once began to prance and caper about.

"Steady, old boy, steady! Be quiet," said Bert, in a tone of command, and, to the surprise of all, the animal obeyed, coming to a standstill.

"Well, I declare, I believe you have actually broken him in!" ejaculated Mr. Barker. "If you have, it is a mighty good day's work for me. I could do nothing with the brute and had thought of selling him, though I was reluctant to do so, and regretted the necessity of such a step."

"He seems quite docile now," observed Bert.

"Yes, for which I have to thank you. I am your debtor, young man."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Bullard, stepping up, his envious spirit unable to longer endure the praise bestowed upon his enemy. "It isn't worth talking about. Any one could have ridden the horse."

"Maybe you could have done it yourself," suggested Mr. Barker, ironically.

"Of course I could. Do you want me to show you?"

With the last word, the one-time bully jerked the rope from Bert's hand and sprang upon the horse's back.

"Stop, you fool!" cried our hero. "What are you going to do?"

"Show you that somebody else can ride a horse as well as you," was the vaunting reply.

The last words were spoken at a distance, for in the middle of the sentence Black Demon had started at a wild dash up the road.

If he acknowledged Bert's mastery over him, he did not seem

prepared to be docile to any one else as yet. Certainly not to Bullard, for he acted as wild as when our hero first touched his back.

Away he went up the road, bearing the hapless bully an unwilling rider.

Bert viewed the unexpected turn of affairs with dire dismay. Better than any of the others did he realize what a difficult and perilous task it was to stick on Black Demon's back. His mind was filled with the liveliest apprehension on Bullard's account.

Mr. Barker shared his feelings in a degree, though probably more vexed than alarmed, not expecting a serious outcome to the affair.

"The young rascal! If I had him here I would horsewhip him!" he exclaimed.

"Maybe you'll never get the chance," said Bert. "He's going to have enough to do to take care of himself for a while. Say, fellows let's jump on our wheels and scorch after him. We may be able to give him a little help just when he needs it."

The suggestion was eagerly adopted, and in a few minutes the entire party were pedaling up the road after the flying Black Demon.

The rider of that fiery animal was just at this time wishing himself anywhere but on his back. For Bullard was finding his self-appointed task anything but the easy one he had supposed it.

Black Demon shied violently again and again. He balked suddenly and started up as speedily. Bullard, unlike Bert, was not able to exercise the least control over him.

"Oh, I wish I hadn't done it! I wish I hadn't tried to be so smart!" he cried, again and again.

Vain regrets!

Black Demon presently settled down into a fierce gallop, and Bullard found great difficulty in keeping his seat.

He was feeling a little reassured, however, when they encountered a branch road, down which the horse promptly turned.

"Good heavens! It's the cliff road! The end runs right to the edge of a precipice!" shrieked the bully.

He spoke the truth. The path, for such it was, rather than a road, found its termination on a steep cliff, whose side fell in sheer descent for five hundred feet to the ground below.

"Oh," cried Bullard, "the crazy brute will carry me over the precipice!"

It certainly looked like it, for the horse showed no sign of stopping. He was thoroughly warmed up to his work, and kept on at the same mad pace.

The bully became fairly frantic with terror at thought of the frightful death before him.

He jerked at the rope about the animal's jaw with all his might, but it was of no avail.

"Stop, stop! you cursed brute!" he shouted again and again.

But he might with as much effect have commanded the wind.

Abject fear now took possession of Bullard. He went as white as a sheet and began to tremble so violently as to be in danger of falling off the horse.

Yet he dared not, to save himself, leap from the animal's back. At the mad pace Black Demon was tearing along he feared such a deed would be fatal.

So he clung to his place, while the steed rushed on, every moment approaching nearer and nearer the fatal precipice.

Now he was very near.

"Help, help!" he screamed, frantically, because he knew not what else to do. "Save me, same me, somebody!"

"Steady, old man!" cried a voice in his rear. "We'll be with you in a minute."

Bullard looked around and saw his schoolmates on bicycles stringing along behind him.

Bert Breeziway was in the lead and he it was who had spoken. He now called out:

"Turn that nag aside! Drive him into the bushes! Don't be afraid!"

"I can't!" shouted back Bullard. "He won't go and I can't make him."

"Well, we'll do it!" cried Bert. "Come on, fellows! Scorch for all you're worth!"

His comrades responded nobly, but Bert still kept the lead.

He was very near Black Demon now.

But Black Demon was very near to the end of the path, to the cliff on which it abruptly terminated.

Nearer and nearer he drew to the fatal verge.

Bert Breeziway was in the lead and prepared to take big risks if necessary.

On shot horse and bicycle in a thrilling race for life or death.

Ah! Bert forges ahead.

But only a little—a very little—not enough to give him the advantage he needs to stop the horse.

Nevertheless, pluck to the backbone, he makes the attempt.

He swings his body out in front of the animal and throws up one hand.

Black Demon swerves aside.

Fatal move!

The precipice is before them, and the horse's involuntary plunge takes him too far out on the edge. Over he goes before he can recover himself.

And Bullard is on his back!

It looks as though not only horse, but rider, too, is surely doomed.

Bert Breeziway, by the failure of his attempt to head the runaway, is thrown to the ground. Entangled with his bicycle, he is apparently out of the game.

But Bert is made of the never-give-up material, and as Black Demon goes over the boy makes a frantic clutch at Bullard. Providentially his grip reached the bully's coat.

There is a fearful jerk, that seemingly almost tears Bert's arm out of the socket. But the arm holds, so does the grip, and so does Bullard's coat.

As a result, the bully's downward flight is suddenly checked. He is brought up with a sharp turn, and hangs suspended in air over the side of the cliff, with nothing but the tenacity of Bert's grip and the strength of his coat between him and a cruel death on the rocks five hundred feet below.

CHAPTER XI.

THE KING OF LIARS.

A scream almost human in its anguish comes up from the noble horse, as he plunges swiftly downward through the air to death. Then, with an awful thud, he strikes the base of the cliff and all is still.

Bert Breeziway, holding his enemy suspended over the edge with one hand, clutches him with the other also and tries to pull him up.

In this he is assisted by the other boys, who have just come spinning up, and the frightened bully, to whose headstrong actions the catastrophe is wholly due, is drawn up to safety.

He sank down on the ground, quivering in every limb, completely unnerved by his hairbreadth escape from a frightful death.

The boys stood around, looking at him in silence for a few moments. Then, when he began to recover somewhat and arose to his feet, Chester said, warmly:

"Say, Bull, you can thank Bert Breeziway's nerve that you're alive and kicking at this minute, and if you've got even a little common decency you'll tell him so."

Several of the other fellows nodded vigorously in emphatic approval.

Bullard turned upon them with a look of well-simulated astonishment.

"Thank him for what?" he asked.

"For what? For saving your worthless life, you cur!" retorted Chester, whose disgust with the other's manner was too deep for language to express.

"I don't see it," said the bully. "If he saved me from going over the cliff, it was only what he ought to do. But for him I wouldn't have been in danger."

"What!" was the general outburst.

"Of course. Didn't he scare the horse by riding the bicycle up into his face and whooping like a madman, so that the animal got crazy mad and jumped over the edge. I could have hauled him in and stopped him if it hadn't been for Breeziway."

"You are a confounded liar!" exclaimed Bert stepping forward, fists clinched and eyes flashing. "If it hadn't been for me your worthless carcass would be lying down there beside that poor horse's, battered and mangled as that is."

"Oh, of course, you say so, and you may try to bully me into agreeing with you," said Bullard, coolly.

He had laid out his course, and was determining to stick to the infamous falsehood.

"You used to do a little in the bullying line yourself before you tried it on me and I licked you," said Bert.

The other made no reply, but slunk away to his own little group of cronies. They had already taken the cue and were prepared to champion his version of the accident, though not one of them but felt it was a lie.

"Well, of all the mean skunks I ever knew!" said Palmer.

"Let's give him a good kicking," suggested Chester.

"No; leave him alone," said Bert. "He's too mean even to kick. Let's go around to the foot of the cliff and take a look at poor Black Demon," he added. "I suppose we can't do anything for him."

Several of the boys had already looked over the edge of the cliff down at the hapless animal, and pronounced him dead beyond a doubt.

However, no one had any objection to taking a nearer view, and they rode off on a circuitous route for the foot of the cliff.

Bullard and his cronies witnessed this move with much satisfaction. They at once took a straight course back toward the Barker House.

The bully being without a bicycle, one of his followers turned his over to him and prepared to foot it himself.

"Look at those fellows!" exclaimed Chester. "They are hurrying to get back to Mr. Barker because they think if they get their story in first they will stand more chance of being believed. We ought not to let 'em get ahead of us that way, Bert."

"Oh, let 'em go," said our hero, disdainfully. "They won't be able to deceive any one with their lies."

The party therefore held to their first intention and proceeded to the spot where the lifeless Black Demon lay.

A glance apprised them that their journey was vain, so far as aid was concerned. The horse had struck upon his head and been killed instantly. He lay on his side with little pools of blood about.

"Well, we'll go and see Barker now," said Bert. "Poor old Black Demon! He was a good horse when properly broken in, and he would have been all right if that cur Bullard had let him alone. Barker won't like it for a cent."

Barker most certainly did not like it. When they reached the hotel-keeper they found him impatiently awaiting their arrival.

Bullard had told his story, corroborated by his friends, and Barker was anxious to hear what Bert had to say.

He was soon satisfied. Our hero plunged promptly into the subject without preliminaries, and gave a graphic account of the affair.

"But this young fellow here says you frightened the horse over the precipice," suggested Barker, as he concluded.

"Is it likely?" asked Bert. "You saw how the horse ran away with him. You could see that he had no control over him whatever. Do you think he could stop the animal on the very edge of the cliff if he couldn't do it before?"

"H'm!" muttered Barker, thoughtfully.

"You believe me, don't you?" demanded Bert.

"Well, I'm out a horse, any way you fix it; that's how it seems to me. A good horse, too."

"He wasn't any good till I rode him," said Bert; "but that isn't the point. Don't you believe me?"

"It lies between you two," said the hotel-keeper, diplomatically. "If I believe one, the other is a liar. The best way I see is for both of you to put in together and pay me for the horse."

"Well, if you expect me to foot the bill for another fellow's actions, you are away out in your calculations," said Bert. "There's the man who is responsible for your horse's death. If you want your money get it out of him."

With the last word, he sprang on his wheel and rode away, accompanied by his friends.

Bullard and his cronies remained behind, for the hotel-keeper had promptly laid hold of the bully, demanding that he pay for the loss of the horse.

A heated altercation followed, Bullard absolutely refusing to pay a cent unless Bert Breeziway did likewise, and Barker insisting that he make good at least half the amount at any rate.

The upshot of the matter was that the hotel-keeper decided to carry his case to the academy, hoping to obtain more satisfaction from Dr. Larrupp.

This he accordingly did.

The doctor called the boys before him and heard their accounts of the affair. Then he gave his decision, holding them both to blame, Bert, because he had mounted the horse in the first place

against Mr. Barker's express command, and Bullard because he had also ridden him without permission.

As to the hotel-keeper, he assured him he need have no uneasiness over his bill, as he himself would pay the amount and charge it to the two boys' parents on the quarterly bills.

That was all Barker wanted, and he departed well satisfied with the result.

But, as may be imagined, Bert was the reverse of satisfied.

His anger, however, was all directed toward Bullard.

But gradually time wore away the sharp edge of Bert's animosity. He finally came to tolerate Bullard in a half-contemptuous way.

The bully was anything but pleased with this, and with several other things as well. It went hard with him that he was not allowed to play the bully now. He missed sadly the ready obedience, the cringing and dread he had been wont to exact from the other boys. He lamented the autocratic sway that had been his.

Lament was the most he could do, however, for he dared not attempt to establish it again. He knew how promptly the fist of Bert Breeziway would overthrow such an effort.

"If only Breeziway were not here!" was the thought that coursed again and again through his brain.

At last the idea produced another, and he began to ask himself: "Can't I get rid of the fellow somehow? Can't I manage it so he'll be kidnaped or dismissed in disgrace, or something of the sort? Let me think a little."

As is usual when one seeks to accomplish an evil end, he presently hit upon a method. The result of his cogitations will shortly appear.

It was a result that was destined to completely change the current of Bert Breeziway's life.

CHAPTER XII.

A PLOT IN THE AIR.

"Hello, there, young fellow! Is your name Bert Breeziway?"

It was after academy hours on a pleasant day late in summer that Bert, wheeling along the road, was thus accosted.

He was on his way from Forest Heights to the school, having taken a spin down to the village to attend to a little errand for himself.

The salutation came from behind, and he was about to glance around, when the person who had hailed shot up beside him.

He also was mounted on a wheel, and was a tall, thin young man, apparently about three-and-twenty, with long and angular limbs and stooping shoulders. He had a sallow complexion, small, pale-blue eyes, a large nose and a few wisps of hair, barely distinguishable, on his upper lip.

Bert was not attracted to him, or even prepossessed in his favor. There was something about the other that inspired a feeling of vague distrust. Nevertheless he answered promptly:

"Yes, I'm Bert Breeziway. What's the trouble? Is anything wanted?"

"Nothing, except you, and by me. I've just dropped down to Forest Heights to spend my few weeks' vacation, and I've already heard so much of the redoubtable Bert Breeziway I felt curious to see him. That's all."

"Humph!" said Bert. "Well, he isn't much to look at. However, you can go ahead and fill your eyes; the exhibition's free."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the stranger.

"I see you are all you have been reported to me to be, Bert Breeziway. I am glad I met you. Let me introduce myself. Frank Senner is my name, and my calling, medical student. I expect to branch out as a full-fledged M. D. in a year or so, and in the meantime I am learning the secrets of the profession at a medical college. As I said, I am spending my vacation in Forest Heights."

Bert listened to these explanations with languid interest. He did not see how they concerned him. He did not like Frank Senner, and did not intend to have any more to do with him at future times than he could help.

Senner rattled off a lot of talk calculated to display his knowledge of medical matters, and Bert answered him in monosyllables. Suddenly the stranger switched off on a new track.

"By the way, that fellow Bullard, up at your school, must be a pretty mean case," he remarked. "I heard something about the contemptible way he lied about you after you saved his life. How was it, anyhow?"

This was a subject on which Bert was quite willing to talk. As he warmed up to his story he forgot all about his dislike of Senner. The latter agreed with him in everything, and by the time the recital was concluded Bert thought him a real good fellow.

After they had separated, and his late companion was wheeling toward the village while he held his course for the academy, his former feeling of distrust returned. But he tried to throw it off with a laugh.

Senner had passed out of Bert's sight about fifteen minutes when he encountered Bullard. The actions of the two indicated that it was not an accidental meeting, but pre-arranged.

"Come at last, have you?" growled the bully. "Well, it's about time. I've worn out all my patience waiting for you."

"You never had much to wear," retorted Senner. "Best thing you can do is to lay in a stock. These things take time."

"How did you make out? No good, I suppose."

"Tiptop. Breeziway and I are now good friends. He didn't like me at first and stood off until I got him to talking about that Black Demon business. I chimed in with everything he said, and that won his heart right away."

"It's a confounded pack of lies!" blustered the bully.

"Your side of it, you mean. Very likely. But that's none of my business. What I want to say is that I am right in with Breeziway now, and you can work the game almost any time you like."

"I'll leave it to you to suggest it to him whenever you see a good chance. Being with him, you'll be better able to set the time than I can. Don't make any mistake about the thing. I don't want there to be any slip this time. Bert Breeziway must be cleared out of my path for good and all."

"He'll be cleared, never worry; there won't be any slip on my part. But how about you? Do you think you can carry the thing through all right?"

"I'm sure I can. I've practiced it several times, and I know just how to behave. There won't be any mistake."

"There's another thing there don't want to be any mistake about, either," said Senner.

"What is it?"

"My money. Don't let that slip your mind."

"Your money is all right. You will get it right down in your hand the minute the thing is done."

"I'd better, or I'll make it warm for you, I tell you. Well, so long! I'll have to be off down to the village to my boarding-house. If I'm late for supper there won't be anything left on the table—it's that kind of a ranch."

With the last words Senner's wheel shot away with a speed that told he intended to be in time for the evening meal, or know why.

Bullard, who was also on a bicycle, rode to the school. He got in late and received a reprimand; but that did not annoy him in the least. His spiteful nature was overjoyed at the prospect that his enemy would soon be out of his way.

It was on the academy grounds, one evening several days later, that Bullard's friend, Dunton, brought up the subject of ghosts.

He told a thrilling story of a haunted house and an insuppressible phantom that roamed about at the unseasonable midnight hour, waking honest folks out of their sleep, frightening them half to death, and causing uneasiness and disturbance generally.

Dunton told the story well, in a graphic and impressive manner, and most of the boys listened to it with respect. There is a grain of superstition in almost every one of us.

Bullard, however, laughed outright at the tale.

"Ghosts!" he exclaimed. "Ha, ha! You can't scare me with any silly yarn like that. I should like to see somebody try to play off ghost on me. I'll bet he'd be sorry."

He said much more to the same effect, until all who heard him were disgusted and glad when bedtime came.

The next day, however, the subject came up again. Dunton made some remark about his ghost story, and Bullard began anew his boastful remarks.

"Ghosts? Bosh! Nonsense! I'd like to see the ghost that could scare me," he said.

"Well," thought Bert Breeziway, who overheard the remarks, "you seem to be actually asking for it."

Since the affair of the runaway Bert had had as little to do with Bullard as possible. He had adopted a policy of ignoring the bully completely. But on this occasion he was strongly tempted to depart from the custom.

Bert had now been at Forest Heights Academy about two

months. He had readily fallen into the routine of the school, possessing the happy faculty of adapting himself to almost any situation or condition.

His tutors liked him on account of the quickness with which his sharp brain grasped their teachings, and disliked him for the practical jokes he frequently executed.

Among his schoolmates Bert also took the lead. He excelled in running, swimming, rowing and athletics generally, and he was acknowledged chief in all plans of daredeviltry and schoolboy larks.

On this occasion, however, Bert decided, after a little thought, not to unbend toward Bullard even so far as to play a practical joke on him.

"Let the cad go! He's not worth thinking about!" he finally exclaimed, and leaping on his bicycle, was off for a five-mile spin.

Within half a mile of the academy he met his new friend, Senner. To Bert the encounter seemed quite accidental; but Senner had been waiting about the spot for some time, hoping our hero would come along.

"Hello!" he saluted.

"Hello!" said Bert.

"Guess I'm going your way. I'll turn around and keep you company," said Senner.

Our hero had no objection, and they rode along together a short distance, when Senner said:

"That Bullard is the biggest blower out, isn't he?"

"Why, do you know him?" asked Bert.

"I have a speaking acquaintance with the fellow. I knew him slightly before he came to school here. I can't say that I like the chap, and every meeting I have with him makes me think less of him."

"I'm no friend of his," rejoined Bert.

"Nor I, either," Senner hastened to declare. "We simply speak, that's all. But what I meant to say was that I ran across him about half an hour ago, and he fairly made me sick. He was telling me about some ghost story he had heard, and was so full of brag I had all I could do to refrain from slapping his jaw to close it."

"Yes, I know. He was at it the other day."

"If he said once he said fifty times that no ghost could scare him. Why don't you play a joke on him and take him down, Breeziway?"

Senner, watching his companion closely, could see that he was strongly tempted. He had no doubt that he should gain his end.

"I don't like to have anything to do with the fellow," said Bert, presently. "I had determined to let him severely alone."

"That is all right, as a rule, but I would let it go just this once. The fellow is nothing but a bag of wind, and he deserves a taking down."

"I guess you're right. I'll do it," decided our hero at last.

Senner could hardly conceal his gratification.

"When?" he asked, with beaming eyes.

"To-night; I'll chop his boastfulness off short."

"Good boy! I wish you luck! Let me have the whole story next time I see you, for I want to know just how it comes out. Jove! I'd give a small fortune to be able to be on the scene to-night when you pop in on him as the ghost!"

Bert laughed, and Senner left him after going a short distance further. Once alone by himself, his expression quickly changed.

"So, so! The fish has taken the bait at last, has he? You will play a practical joke on Bullard to-night, eh, Mr. Bert Breeziway? Well, if we only work things right it will be the dearest joke you ever played—a lark that will embitter your whole life, and that you will remember with tears of remorse to your dying day!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A PRACTICAL JOKE.

"Ah! What was that?"

"What was that?"

"I thought I heard a noise. Sounded like the doc."

"Well, it wasn't. Nothing of the sort. What's the matter with you, Bert, to-night? You don't act like yourself at all; you are as nervous as an old woman."

"I don't know. I do feel out of sorts, Chet, that's a fact—as if something bad was going to happen—sort of a presentiment of coming evil."

"Pshaw! You're a nice one to go to play on any one's superstitious fears, ain't you? A fellow—that's chock-full of the same thing himself."

"I must shake the feeling off, that's all. What kind of a mid-night specter do I make, Chet?"

"Immense!"

The scene was Bert and Chester's room, and the speakers were those young gentlemen. The hour was the unusual one of twelve at night, the time which Bert had set for his practical joke on the bully.

He was already attired for the escapade. He had wrapped himself in a sheet, and with flour rubbed over his face and hair until they were thoroughly whitened, he did indeed present a ghostly appearance.

Chester, who had been helping him "fix up," sat on the edge of his bed regarding his chum with approving eyes.

"Yes, you'll do fast enough," he said. "You're painted right up to perfection."

"I'll be off, then," said Bert. "Watch out for fun."

"Go ahead, then, and good luck!" said Chester.

Bert went with a noiseless, gliding motion, like a ghost in very truth, out of the room and down the dimly-lighted, deserted hall.

The distance to the bully's room was not far, and in a few moments he was at the door.

It was slightly ajar, and pushing it further open, he peered in.

The room was occupied by Bullard and Dunton, who lay sound asleep—or was it only apparently so?—in separate beds. The gas had been turned out, but the blinds were thrown back and the shade raised almost to the top, so that the clear sunlight might stream in to greet the eyes of the sleepers on their awakening next morning.

Through this open window the moonlight fell in a soft flood that rendered objects in the room fairly distinct—quite enough so for Bert's purpose.

"Now for it!" he muttered. "We'll give him a chance to make good some of those boasts."

Noiselessly he entered the room and stole across to the bedside of the bully.

"What a jump he'll give when he wakes up and sees me standing here!" he thought.

He put his hand on his man's shoulder and shook him softly. There was no response.

He shook him again, a little harder this time, but also without effect.

Then, becoming impatient, he gave him a vigorous shake that could hardly fail to arouse the soundest sleeper.

Bullard opened his eyes.

For a moment or two he lay in that semi-consciousness that succeeds waking, with his gaze fixed vacantly upon Bert.

Then, suddenly comprehending, he started bolt upright in bed.

His teeth fairly chattered with fear and his eyeballs dilated with terror as he gazed upon the dread object at his bedside.

"Wha—wh—wha—" he gasped, and apparently from fright was unable to finish the sentence.

Bert chuckled inwardly with glee.

"This is the brave ghost-annihilator," was his unspoken, thought.

Bullard was staring at him in the wildest terror.

He was apparently almost speechless with fear, but he managed to gasp:

"G—way—g—way!" at the same time feebly repulsing Bert with his hand.

Then the awful specter opened its arms and reached forth as though to embrace him.

This was the last straw. The bully sprang up wildly, with a succession of piercing shrieks that rang forth with startling effect on the still night air.

"Oh, oh! Take it away! Take it off! Oh, oh, oh!"

This was a success far beyond Bert's expectations.

"Shut up, you fool!" he cried. "Do you want to arouse the place?"

"Take it away! Take it away!" screamed Bullard. "Oh, take it away!"

"Shut your trap, you idiot! Don't you see now that it's I, Bert Breeziway, only having a lark with you? You bragged so much about not being afraid of ghosts I thought I would spring one on you. Don't you see now?"

"Take it away! Take it away!" the bully continued to scream, frantically. "Don't let it get me! Take it away!"

"Confound the cur! He will have the whole place down on me!" muttered Bert.

As yet he saw nothing more serious in the escapade than a good laugh at Bullard's expense next day.

But suddenly the latter, with one bound, leaped out of bed, and cowering down in the furthest corner, looked at him with frenzied eyes.

Almost at the same instant the night-shirted form of Chester appeared in the doorway.

"Quick, Bert!" he cried. "I couldn't wait for you any longer. I thought something was wrong. What kept you such an awful while, any way? This cur's yells have aroused the whole place, and the doc will be down on us in a jiffy if we don't light out."

Bert made no move, but looked at the crouching bully.

"Come on," pleaded Chester. "Quick, or we're goners!"

"Wait a minute," said his chum.

He was still gazing at Bullard with an expression of perplexity. Chester's eyes naturally took the same direction.

"Great Scott!" he burst forth.

Bert did not speak, but looked his interrogation.

"Great thunderation! What's the matter with the fellow?" exclaimed Chester. "Is he going daft?"

The last words struck a cold fear to Breeziway's heart.

"My God, no!" he cried.

"Look here, Bull, you know me, don't you?" said his chum, advancing a step toward the crouching figure.

But the latter frantically waved him back.

"Take it away! Take it away!" he screamed. "Another dead man! Don't let it get me! Take it away!"

Chester recoiled with a startled cry. Bert stood staring like one spellbound.

"What does this mean?" all at once demanded a voice behind them.

They turned with a start; it was the doctor. Behind him were a number of the boys.

They were caught red-handed in the act for a certainty; but somehow that did not seem to matter much now. The fear of a greater evil, that as yet they dared not name, overshadowed the lesser one.

"Breeziway! Chester! What does this mean?" said "the doc," severely.

They did not answer in words, but mechanically each pointed toward the crouching figure in the corner.

"Bullard, get up!" ordered Dr. Larrupp. "I do not—"

He was interrupted by wild screams from the bully.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRACTICAL JOKE'S TRAGIC RESULT.

"Another one! Another, one! Take 'em away! Don't let 'em get at me! Don't let the dead men have me! Make 'em go back to their graves where they belong! Take 'em away! Take 'em away!"

So startling was Bullard's outburst that the doctor recoiled. His eyes fell on Bert.

"You have been up to some of your practical joking, Breeziway."

"He boasted so much about not being afraid of any ghost that I wanted to test him once," penitently explained the bogus phantom, for whom the fun was all out of the night's escapade.

"Leave the room, you and Chester! We will settle this matter in the morning."

The chums obeyed, but lingered just outside the door and listened with anxious hearts to what next transpired.

"Now, then, Bullard, I order you to stop this nonsense. I will positively have no more of it," began the doctor.

"Take 'em away! take 'em away!" shrieked the bully, with frantic gesticulations. "Don't let them get me."

"He acts as if he was out of his head," said Dunton, who was in the group of boys at the doctor's heels. "Hadn't I better run for a doctor?"

"You will find none nearer than the village, and that is two miles."

"You forget, sir! Dr. Hartley lives on the way. I should like to go. Bull is my chum, you know."

"Very well; you may."

Dunton rushed to his room and pulled on his garments with incredible rapidity.

His face wore a look of wild elation. He did not appear like a boy whose chum was in danger of going mad.

"It's working, it's working!" he muttered several times to himself. "It's working like a charm! There won't be a single hitch."

In a few minutes he dashed out of the academy and set off down the road.

He had barely left the building behind him when a voice exclaimed:

"Hello!"

"Hello!" rejoined Dunton; "that you?"

The stranger was Frank Senner.

He had his bicycle with him, but he was not riding it at the time of the encounter. He had dismounted, leaned the machine against a tree and was smoking a cigarette with evident relish.

"You oughtn't to be doing that," said Dunton; "you might be seen. That light, small as it is, shows in the darkness."

"Oh, no danger," rejoined Senner, carelessly. "No one along at this time of night. How are things going?"

"Perfect as clock-work. You're to come in at once. Been waiting long?"

"Yes, some time. I made sure to be early enough, for I knew that a few minutes late might spoil the whole thing."

"Well, come along in. You know what to say."

The two hurried into the academy, Senner leaving his bicycle in the lower hall. In a moment they stood in Bullard's room, confronting Dr. Larrupp and the boys.

"I didn't have to go as far as Hartley's, sir," said Dunton. "Before I had gone any distance at all I had the good luck to meet this gentleman, Mr. Senner, who is a friend of mine. He is studying to be a doctor, and I guess he knows pretty near all about it. I told him what was the matter in as few words as I could, and he said he thought he would do."

"Yes," added Senner, "I think I may truthfully class myself as an M. D. in all but diploma, and I shall have that very soon. I've gone through the mill."

"If you can give any explanation of this boy's strange actions you will certainly place me under obligations, Mr. Senner," said the doctor.

The medical student advanced toward Bullard, who greeted his approach in the same way that he had done the others.

"Take it away! take it away!" he screamed. "Don't let it get me!"

"He has received a severe fright," said Senner.

"I believe one of the boys sought to frighten him by impersonating a ghost—a most reprehensible action," said Dr. Larrupp.

The medical student looked at Bullard again and shook his head. Then he turned to the master.

"The joke has had a most serious result. I fear the worst."

"Fear what? What do you mean?" asked the doctor, quickly, alarmed at the other's tone.

"The boy's present state may be only temporary; it may be permanent."

"If temporary——"

"If temporary it will last for several months; if permanent, well——"

He paused significantly.

"Great heavens, man!" gasped the doctor. "You surely cannot mean——"

"I mean that this practical joke you speak of has taken such effect upon the boy as to drive him out of his mind. He may recover after several months, but I very much fear that he will be insane for life!"

Bert Breeziway, outside in the hall, almost fainted as he heard the terrible verdict.

"I have worse than murdered Bull, Chet," he said, in a hoarse voice to his startled chum. "I have driven him crazy with that ghost business of mine!"

CHAPTER XV.

BERT GOES OUT INTO THE WORLD.

Bert Breeziway and Charlie Chester stood in the hall, looking at each other with startled glances.

"That's what I have done," said the former, solemnly. "I have driven Bull crazy!"

"Oh, don't say that," said Chester.

"What else can I say?"

"Maybe it ain't so bad as all that."

"Yes, it is. Something tells me it is fully as bad, if not worse."

"Well, it wasn't your fault. Who could guess the fellow was going to be such a scare-baby?"

"That doesn't help things any. I was the one that scared him."

"Don't blame yourself so much. No one could guess it was going to turn out like this."

Bert was silent for a moment or two; then he suddenly extended his hand, with the words:

"Good-by, Chet!"

"What's the matter?" asked his chum, in amazement.

"I'm going to get out."

"No!"

"Yes, I am. I couldn't bear to stay here after this thing."

"Going home?"

"No, I couldn't bear to go there, either."

"Where are you going, then?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'll strike somewhere."

"Don't you do it!" exclaimed Chester, warmly.

"Oh, I must. I couldn't stay here. I'll get out while the excitement is on, so I won't be stopped."

While speaking Bert walked rapidly toward his room. Chester hurried along at his side, wanting to interpose objections, but not knowing what to say.

Bert made short work, when once in their room, of throwing off the ghostly habiliment and donning his everyday garb.

"I ought to pack a satchel, but there's no time," he said.

"Leave that to me," answered his chum. "Send me a note of what you want and where it is to go to, and I'll see that it gets there. You needn't fear I'll betray you."

"I'm not afraid of that at all. I know you too well, Chet." Bert held out his hand again. "Well, good-by!"

"Wait a minute. How much money have you got?"

"Enough to see me through till I get a chance to earn more, I reckon," said Bert, recklessly.

Chester emptied his pocketbook into his hand, and held the contents out to his chum.

"I won't take it," said the latter.

"You will!" and he shoved it into Bert's pocket before he could resist.

"You are a true friend, Chet," said Bert, with a catch in his voice. "I won't forget this when this thing blows over, if it ever does."

"I never met a better fellow than you, Bert Breeziway, and I don't want to meet one," answered Chester, with tears in his eyes. "If you ever want anything from me, you can have it, and I don't want you to forget it, either. You may have some tough times after you get away from here, and if you do I want you to remember that we're chums still."

Bert's answer was a pressure of the hand, more eloquent than words.

They parted at the outer door. Chester watched until the darkness swallowed up his chum's familiar form, and then went back to his room, with a feeling that a great deal had gone out of his life and there was a big vacuum in it.

Meanwhile, Bert was striding away through the dusk in the direction of Forest Heights.

He was fairly adrift on the ocean of life. He had burned his bridges, had voluntarily severed all ties that bound him to home, parents and friends.

Pampered and provided for, shielded from the slightest care and trouble, his every wish gratified, his every want supplied from his birth, he should henceforth have to provide for and shield himself.

Well, the world was all before him, and he faced it with unflinching front. The past was behind, and the future was his to make.

He had no decided plans as to where he should go or what he should do. He had acted on the spur of the moment, and circumstances must shape his course.

Once he stopped, with an angry exclamation:

"What a fool I was not to have brought my wheel. I might just as well ride as walk, and I'd get over the ground much quicker. I've a good mind to go back for it."

He paused in irresolution, but after a moment shook his head.

"It would never do. I'd be collared, sure. No, hoof it is the word now for fair."

And again he trudged on into the night.

Meanwhile, back in the building which Bert had left a group

was gathered in Bullard's room, casting looks of awe and horror into one another's faces.

The doctor had gasped with horror at Frank Senner's words:

"Insane! You cannot mean it."

"It is too true," returned Senner, solemnly. "The boy has been subjected to such a terrible fright that he has been driven out of his mind. Look at him. Do not his appearance and his actions furnish as strong a confirmation of my words as one could ask for?"

At that moment, as though he actually comprehended the words, Bullard jumped up and screamed wildly:

"Don't let it get me! Take it away, take it away!"

"There! What do you say to that? Do you want any further proof?" asked the medical student, triumphantly.

The doctor shook his head, sadly.

"Let us all go out of the room," he suggested. "That may serve to quiet him."

Senner shook his head, with a smile, but the trial was made, notwithstanding.

Every person quitted the room save Bullard. They merely stepped into the hall, however, where they waited the result of the experiment with intense anxiety.

"Stop it, stop it! There it is, there it is! It's coming for me!" were the startling shrieks that reached their ears.

Peering into the room again, they beheld its sole inmate crouching abjectly in the corner, looking up with eyes of terror at an imaginary assailant, at whom his cries were directed.

"There is no one else in the room?" said the doctor.

"No," returned Senner. "The second person exists only in his disordered brain, and that is where the trouble lies."

"I fear you are right and that it is too true," said Dr. Larrupp. "What can be done for the unfortunate boy? What would you advise?"

"For the present, nothing. Rest and quiet, I think, will do more good than anything else. Suppose we put him to bed and I sit by him a while and see how he gets along?"

"Just as you say," agreed the principal, and the suggestion was accordingly carried out.

Bullard was put to bed in another room, in the hope that the change would aid to banish his unpleasant delusion. Senner took a seat at his bedside and bent an attentive look on him. The boy closed his eyes and in a few minutes his deep, regular breathing announced that he was fast asleep.

Dr. Larrupp, having dispatched the boys to their several rooms, had seated himself at the foot of the bed, prepared to maintain a sleepless vigil until daybreak. But at the sound of Bullard's deep breathing, Senner remarked:

"I do not think, sir, it will be necessary for you, too, to sit up. The patient, as you see, is now resting quietly, and one at his bedside should be quite sufficient. Permit me to suggest that you retire, and should anything alarming happen, I will call you."

"No, I prefer to sit up," said the principal, sturdily. "But excuse me for a few moments; I shall be back very soon."

He quitted the room as he spoke. The door had barely closed behind him when the sleeper's deep breathing ceased abruptly and he opened his eyes. Evidently he had been only shamming slumber.

"Is the doc gone?" he asked.

"Stepped out for a couple of minutes, that's all. If you have anything to say, be quick, for he'll probably be back in a jiffy."

"How have I worked the thing?—that's all I want to know. How is it running?"

"O. K.; couldn't be better if you tried."

"Was Breeziway scared?"

"Out of his seven senses, I reckon. He skipped out at the first alarm, and I haven't seen him since."

"Good. He'll most likely be expelled, if I don't show signs of recovery in a hurry."

"Very likely."

"Good. I'll be as mad as a March hare until they fire him out. Then I will gradually recover, eh?"

"Yes, yes, of course. Those things were all settled long ago. Look sharp, now, for here comes Larrupp."

"Well, I'm glad I make a successful lunatic," was Bullard's response.

When the doctor re-entered the room, an instant later, he found the young reprobate breathing in the same deep, regular manner. And, as the bully presently did really fall asleep, the principal

had no suspicion that he had been hoaxed, or of the brief conversation that had occurred in his absence.

Still less did he dream of the dark scheme that conversation revealed—the foul plot by which, through Bullard's pretending insanity, and carrying out the plan by the aid of Senner and Dunton, the high-spirited Bert Breeziway was driven forth into the world, with, as he thought, a brand as of Cain upon him, to live or die, starve or carve out his living and fortune, as circumstances and his own stout heart should decide.

The shrewd plot of the conspirators had signally succeeded. Bert Breeziway was an outcast. Let us see how he faced the world.

CHAPTER XVI.

BERT STRIKES A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

"Trust to luck, trust to luck! Stare fate in the face.
Sure, your heart will be aisy if it's in the right place."

The young gentleman who voiced the above sentiment was, of course, the irrepressible Bert Breeziway.

Bert must still be Bert. Nothing could crush his spirits or dampen his ardor long. Though the shadow of an awful error hung over him, even as the darkness of night clung about, though he had fled in darkness and disgrace, like a felon, his buoyant spirits were already beginning to recover from the blow.

He did not sing the words, however, for he was neither so heartless nor thoughtless as that. He merely murmured them softly as he strolled along. Then his mind went back to the cowering, shrieking Bullard, and he became solemn again.

Steadily on he trudged, until he had put a good distance between himself and Forest Heights. Then he began to feel a little like resting, for he had as yet had no sleep that night.

Just then several drops of rain fell upon his face.

Evidently they were the precursors of a storm, which would soon be in full sway. It behooved our hero to seek a better shelter with dispatch.

He began the search. Fortunately, it was a short one, for the drops began to come thicker and faster as he found himself facing the building he sought.

"No use trying the door; of course that's locked. And, if I manage to get in the window, ten to one there's a ferocious bulldog inside yearning to sample my flesh."

He reconnoitered the place carefully, but could discover no window that offered a means of ingress.

Finally he approached the door, though with no idea that he could enter it.

There was a padlock upon it, but to his surprise it was unlocked.

"The hayseed forgot to close up tight, and left the door open. So much the better for yours truly."

Such was Bert's opinion at the time, but he afterward had cause to alter it. Before he got through with that barn, he knew that the farmer had not neglected to attend to the door, but had secured it as carefully as usual.

He did not stop to moralize now, however. He could get into the barn, and that was enough to know at present. The rain was falling too fast to think of anything else.

Bert opened the door softly, and slipped quickly in like a shadow, pulling the door quietly shut behind him. The whole process consumed hardly a second.

It was darker inside than out. At first he could not see his hand before his face, and he stood for a moment until his eyes should get accustomed to the gloom, and he could get his bearings. Suddenly he received a genuine shock.

The sound of voices met his ear:

"Hist, Bill!" came in a low tone. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what? I didn't hear nothin'."

"Didn't the door open and shut just then?"

"No," came the positive answer. "You're as bad as an old woman. If I'd known you were goin' to be so nervous I'd never taken you in this job with me."

"It's a nasty job, and I'm afraid we may get caught. If we ever should be, it's all up with us. We'd never live to see our trial; these old hayseeds would lynch us, sure."

"Oh, don't be such a fool, Jake. They've got to catch us first, and there ain't no danger of that. You get scared at your own shadow."

"I wish I was only sure it was my shadow," grumbled Jake.

As may be supposed, Bert Breeziway pricked up his ears and straightway did some very sharp thinking.

It was evident that there were two men in the barn.

They were fugitives from justice, in hiding on account of some crime they had committed.

Presently the men spoke again. They used the same low, cautious tones, but Bert overheard their words distinctly. The first voice was that of Jake:

"Is the girl all right?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Safe and sound?"

"Yes, I tell you."

"Gag over her mouth all right?"

"Yes. What's the matter with you?"

It was evident that Jake's companion, Bill, was impatient with his pal's uneasiness.

"Oh, nothin'," responded Jake, "only it's best to be careful."

This second whispering set Bert to thinking anew.

So the precious pair had a girl captive, had they? Well, that settled one thing—he should make it his business to get her out of their clutches.

Bert's eyes had by this time become somewhat accustomed to the darkness, and he could dimly make out the lay of the land, so to speak.

This apartment of the barn contained two or three stalls and a couple of barrels and bags of feed.

In one of the stalls, Bert surmised, the two men were hiding. Whether the others were occupied by horses or not, he could not tell as yet.

He could dimly discern various outlines of objects, but could not see them clearly. With great caution, he began to work his way along the wall, thinking to get behind one of the barrels.

Suddenly there was a catastrophe!

Bert trod upon a short, round stick, which, rolling over under his feet, threw him off his balance.

He fell forward, striking a board cover on top of the barrel, and knocking it to the floor, with a prodigious clatter.

"The fat's all in the fire now!" was Bert's exclamation to himself. "Now for the tug of war!"

He straightened up, and braced himself for the coming struggle. That the villains would take the alarm was beyond a doubt.

"There, Bill, what did I tell you?" came, in a loud whisper, from Jake.

"You're right; there's somebody in here besides us."

"What are you going to do, Bill?"

"I'm going to fix the cursed spy so he won't be watching us any more."

Bert strained his eyes and ears in the darkness, and in an instant made out a dark form advancing.

Then he knew that while he stood unarmed and weaponless, a murderous ruffian, knife in hand, was stealing upon him in the darkness.

He ran his hands along the wall in search of something for a weapon.

Eureka! he had found it.

His fingers closed over a round handle, and, on lifting it, he knew he had a pitchfork in his grasp.

Bert raised the implement and poised it in front of him. Then he spoke, in a clear, firm tone:

"Keep away!" he ordered, sharply. "I've got a pitchfork, and if you come any nearer, or try any funny business with that knife, I'll jab it right into you where it will do the most good! Don't run away with any idea that I'm squeamish! I've taken your measure, and I'd just as soon kill you as I would a snake under my feet!"

The man, Bill, stopped abruptly in his forward movement, and an angry curse fell from his lips.

Presently Bill spoke:

"Put that thing down!" he growled.

"What for? I think I see myself!"

"Put it down, I tell you!"

"So you can run a knife into me? Oh, yes, I'm full of those little tricks!"

"I won't do anything to you."

"Not while I hold this pitchfork in front of you. I know you won't."

"I don't want to hurt you."

"How quickly you changed your mind! This pitchfork is such a good persuader, I guess I'll keep it just where it is."

But the ruffian was not yet ready to acknowledge defeat.

The pitchfork prevented him from getting to close quarters, but there was another way to make use of the knife.

Drawing back his arm, he hurled the weapon, point foremost, straight as an arrow at Bert's heart.

Swift as the action was, the boy had marked the drawing back of the arm, and anticipated what was to follow.

On the moment he gave a sharp dodge sideways and down. He was barely out of the way, when the knife shot over him and hung, quivering, in the wall, behind the spot where he had just been standing.

"You treacherous cur! Take that!" exclaimed Bert, angrily, and lunging out quickly with his weapon.

"Oh, curse you! You've stabbed me!" ejaculated the ruffian.

At the same time Bert was conscious that the prongs of the pitchfork had encountered a slight resistance, and he knew they had penetrated his enemy's flesh.

He drew back his weapon at once, and the fellow fell to the floor, with a groan.

Bert again stood on guard. He did not yet know what the other fellow intended to do. He was also afraid the man he had wounded might be shamming, to a certain extent at any rate, with the idea of catching him off his guard.

"Oh!" exclaimed the fellow on the floor, with a dismal groan.

"Now you've done it!" said his companion. "You've killed Bill!"

"I'll give you the same dose if you don't look out!" declared Bert, sternly.

He advanced sharply, menacing the fellow with the pitchfork.

The man retreated from before the gleaming prongs of steel.

"What are you trying to do?" he cried. "Look out or you'll stick me!"

"That's just what I'm after. You may bet I'll stick you in a hurry if you don't get out!"

With the last words, Bert made a sharp advance on his opponent. He drove the fellow into a corner, and, as he turned half around, to save his face, the boy gave several slight jabs with the pitchfork at the most prominent portion of his anatomy.

The fellow shrieked and danced with fright.

"Oh, oh! I'm stabbed!" he cried.

"Wounded in the rear!" quoth Bert, sardonically. "You won't be able to sit down for a month."

"Oh! have you no mercy?"

"Not a little bit. I'm seeking to emulate the sanguinary example of Merciless Mike, the Pitiless Pirate of the Spanish Main, who used to slaughter a shipload of people every day just for recreation; besides the others he killed in a regular business way. Ever read about Mike? It's a dandy library."

The other made no reply, but, seeing an opening, dashed for the door. In a minute he had closed it behind him.

Feeling that he could now do so with safety, Bert struck a match. A quick survey disclosed a lantern hanging on the wall. He lit it, and then examined the wounded tramp.

He was apparently more frightened than hurt, and our hero wasted no more time on him. With the lantern, he proceeded to explore the barn.

A brief search sufficed to reveal, lying in one of the stalls, the person of a young girl. Her wrists were tied, and there was a bandage over her mouth, preventing speech.

In a twinkling, Bert had these bonds removed.

For a few moments the girl rubbed her wrists, and then her mouth, which were numb from the arrested circulation of the blood. Then she spoke:

"Thank you," she said, simply.

"You're very welcome," returned her rescuer, with equal directness.

He could see that his companion was a very pretty girl, about the same age as himself. Her hair was long, and of a reddish-golden shade, eyes large, and blue in color, and nose, ears, mouth and chin delicately chiseled. All her features were regular and her form erect and shapely.

She took in Bert with a comprehensive glance, and was evidently favorably impressed.

"My name is Mabel Trescott," she vouchsafed.

"And mine's Bert Breeziway—at your service."

He had intended to give another name, since he had run away

from school and home, and did not wish to be tracked. But the old cognomen slipped out before he knew it.

"You're just like your name," said the girl, with a faint smile; and Bert thought he had never seen such a pretty face before.

The wounded tramp on the floor stirred, and uttered a groan.

The girl clutched her hero's arm convulsively, and he could feel her trembling.

"Take me away, quick, please!" she said.

"Certainly. Where shall I take you?"

"Out of here first—quick! Then I will tell you afterward."

"Come on, then," said Bert.

She was trembling with fear, and he put his arm around her, lest she should fall. He was half afraid she was going to faint, as he led her from the place.

The eyes of the ruffian on the floor followed them, with a baleful glare. He ground out an oath as he saw his prey slipping out of his grasp.

"Cuss Jake! He ain't got no more sand than a yeller dog!" he grated.

Bert did not consider it necessary to pause to reply, and in another moment the barn door closed behind himself and the girl.

"Oh, what a blessing to be under the blue sky of heaven again—and free!" she exclaimed.

She clasped her hands, and turned her eyes upward, while her lips moved slightly for a moment.

Bert guessed that she was breathing a prayer of gratitude for her deliverance, and reverently bared his head. Somehow, with all his self-reliance and assurance, he felt abashed in Mabel Trescott's presence.

But the next moment she had finished her prayer, and turned to him, with a smile, putting her hand on his arm.

"And now I am going to ask you to take me home," she said.

Her confidence in and reliance upon him appealed to Bert's chivalry at once.

"Certainly I will," he said. "Which way do we go?"

His companion answered the question with another.

"Did you ever hear of Sellers' Circus?" she asked.

"Sellers? What—Sellers' Great Continental Circus and Monster Aggregation of Marvels?"

"Yes, yes; that's it. You have the name down pat."

"Yes, I remember it on the posters. The circus is going to show at Forest Heights in a day or two."

"That's just it. You live at Forest Heights, then?"

Bert was at a loss for a reply. He did not want to admit the truth, and he was unskilled in falsifying.

"I—I—well, I've been there—"

"Excuse me," said Mabel, quickly. "I did not intend to be inquisitive. But you are quite right about the circus. We are billed to appear in Forest Heights to-morrow. They are probably even now pitching their tents on the outskirts of the town."

She paused with the last remark. With her sharp intuition, she had divined that her companion, for some reason, wished to avoid Forest Heights. Yet it was absolutely necessary for her to go there, and she did not know the way; besides which, she shrank from being alone in the night, after her late experience.

Bert, on his part, was doing a little thinking. He felt that he ought to be using this time to put as much distance as possible between himself and the scene of his fatal practical joke.

But—could he abandon Mabel?

His cheek flushed with shame at the bare idea.

"No, by George! I won't be such a cowardly cur as that!" he murmured. "I'll see this girl through, whatever the consequences—even if they land me in prison. They can't more than kill me, I reckon."

Aloud, he said:

"Yes, I know the way to Forest Heights, and will be glad to take you there."

"If you please," was the reply; and so, by a curious twist of fate, our hero found himself going back to the place from which he had fled in such hot haste but a few hours before.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREAT CONTINENTAL CIRCUS.

"You see, I am one of the circus performers—one of Sellers' star attractions, I suppose I may venture to call myself," said Mabel Trescott.

"I didn't know I had met such a distinguished person," said Bert.

The twain were plodding along the road to Forest Heights, and had begun to beguile the way with conversation.

Mabel laughed gayly at Bert's reference to herself as distinguished. She had begun to recover from the effects of her late trying situation and to regain her spirits.

"Yes, I am one of the performers," she said. "But my work is more passive than otherwise. A cannon does the active part of the act."

"A cannon?" repeated Bert, puzzled.

"Yes. I am the human projectile, you know. I am shot out of a cannon and drop in a net on the other side of the tent."

"Isn't it dangerous?"

"Not if it is done right. You want to keep your wits about you, and your nerve up."

"Did those tramps belong to the circus, too?" asked Bert.

"They had worked with it for a few days, but I think they only did so in order to familiarize themselves with things a little, so as to carry out their designs against me."

Mabel paused a moment, and, laying her hand on Bert's arm, said, impressively:

"They meant to kill me!"

Our hero was as startled as if a red-hot brand had touched him.

"No!" he exclaimed, incredulously.

"Yes," insisted Mabel. "I overheard them say so, as they forced me along."

"Had they any apparent cause to wish to kill you?"

"Not the slightest, that I know of. It is all a deep mystery to me. I have not an enemy in the world."

"There must be a darky in the woodpile somewhere," declared Bert.

"I do not know what to make of it. The men decoyed me from the circus tent by the simple plan of representing that some one wished to see me outside. As soon as we had gone far enough to be secure from observation, they seized me, bound my arms, and compelled me to walk away between them."

"But their plot miscarried. There was to have been a conveyance waiting for them at a given point, but it was not on hand. As they had gone too far to back out, they were compelled to proceed on foot, forcing me to do the same. They kept a sharp lookout for the carriage all along the way, and many and bitter were their curses when it did not appear. They declared over and over that they had been betrayed."

"My hands being bound, and a gag over my mouth, increased my difficulties of travel; but they forced me on, until I thought I should fairly drop. Then the rain began to fall, and we went into the barn. They were going on as soon as the rain stopped, but before that you came. And—God bless you for it!"

At last they came within sight of the village of Forest Heights, just as dawn was breaking. Their eyes fell, too, upon a great tent men were putting up in a large, vacant lot by the morning light.

"Oh, there they are!" cried Mabel, joyously. "There is Mr. Bridgman now!"

She pressed forward eagerly, and Bert was compelled to quicken his steps to keep pace with her.

"Oh, Mr. Bridgman!" exclaimed Mabel.

The person she addressed, a tall and slender gentleman, had been directing the operations of two men who were busy tightening some of the ropes that held the great tent in place.

His back was toward the arrivals, but at Mabel's voice he turned at once.

"Hel-lo!" he ejaculated, his eyes growing very big and round as they fell upon the girl. "Where did you drop from—the sky?"

"No; I was kidnaped last night by two ruffians, and this brave young gentleman rescued me from them. He is a hero, Mr. Bridgman."

"Glad to meet him, then," said the latter, grasping Bert's hand and pressing it warmly. "Heroes are a scarce commodity nowadays."

"Miss Trescott makes altogether too much of it," rejoined Bert. "What I did, did not amount to anything."

"Oh, it did! I don't know what would have happened but for you. You truly saved my life. Don't you believe him, Mr. Bridgman. He is too modest."

"Doubtless," assented the gentleman. "Modesty accompanies bravery very often. I will take your version, Mabel. But, now,

don't you think you had better lie down and rest a while? I am afraid you are going to have a fever. Do you feel well?"

"I've got a bad headache," confessed the girl, pressing one hand to her brow, "but I will be all right after a little sleep. I believe I will lie down for a short time. Don't let me sleep too long, Mr. Bridgman. Be sure to call me in time for the parade."

"I won't let you sleep too long," was the gentleman's answer.

His face had a troubled look, as he glanced at the girl, and Bert could not wonder at it, when he marked her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"Mr. Bridgman, I forgot to introduce you, but this is Mr. Bert Breeziway. Any favors you may be able to show to him will be the same as though given to me."

"I will look after Mr. Breeziway, all right. You go and lie down."

"Very well, then, since you are so persistent, sir," she said, with a little pout. "You will excuse me, Bert? Good-morning for a little while," and she gave her hand to our hero, with a smile.

The next moment she had tripped out of the tent and was gone.

"I don't know you, Breeziway," said Mr. Bridgman, putting his hand on Bert's shoulder, "but I do know this much—if you have done anything for that little miss—and she says you have, most decidedly—you have made firm friends of myself and every man in this show. There isn't one of us that doesn't almost worship the ground that sweet child walks on, and wouldn't do anything for Queen Mab, as we call her. Don't you forget that, my boy. If you want a friend, I'm your man."

In his eagerness, he clutched Bert's shoulder so tightly that it pained.

"I'll see what I can do to make you comfortable around here by and by. Now, I want you to come and have some breakfast with me."

They adjourned to an eating house, and partook of an appetizing meal. Though Bert was in constant fear that some one might enter the place who knew him—fortunately, the proprietor did not—he managed to do justice to the repast.

At the conclusion, he put his hand in his pocket, but Mr. Bridgman insisted on settling the complete score.

A dozen times during the meal Bert was on the point of confiding his situation and circumstances to his companion. He abstained, however, and Mr. Bridgman returned to the circus tent, in that respect as ignorant as before.

He was met by a wildly-excited woman, who exclaimed:

"Mab is sick! She won't be able to do her act to-day!"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Bridgman. "Sick! What kind of sickness?"

"She has got a bad fever," replied the woman.

She had just come from the couch of Mabel, having called another person to take her place while she saw Mr. Bridgman.

"You ought to hear her rave! All about barns, and tramps, and pitchforks. I know she will never be able to do her act to-day."

Mr. Bridgman uttered a groan.

"I was afraid of that when I saw how she looked before she lay down," he said. "Let us take a look at her. Come on, Breeziway."

Bert followed him to a space partitioned off from the dressing-room.

On a cot, with several pillows under her head, lay Mabel Trescott.

She was tossing restlessly about. Her golden hair hung in confusion about her shoulders, her eyes were unnaturally bright, and her face flushed. A woman sat by her side, watching her closely.

As the three entered, she raised a finger, to enjoin silence. They stepped on tiptoe, and did not speak. The invalid was talking to herself.

"Oh, don't take me away; let me go—please let me go!" she exclaimed. "Oh, my, how brave he is! He isn't a bit afraid of him. Now, that ruffian has a knife in his hand. Oh, he will kill him! No; see, the boy has a pitchfork! He stabs him with it! Oh, how brave he is!"

"She is dreaming of the fight in the barn last night," murmured Bert, looking, with compassionate eyes, at poor Mabel.

"How do you feel, little girl?" asked Mr. Bridgman, advancing to the cot and bending over it.

But the occupant only replied:

"Oh, now the ruffian has got a knife! Now he stabs him with a pitchfork! Brave, brave—how brave!"

Seeing that his presence was useless, Mr. Bridgman turned sadly away.

"She does not know me," he said. "She is quite out of her head; has a bad fever. Let everything possible be done for her, and I will be in again in a short time."

They left the apartment. Once outside, Mr. Bridgman murmured:

"I am very sorry for this—sorry on Mab's account and on our own. She has been billed extensively—in fact, we have made her our leading feature, and when she fails to appear, people will raise a cry of fraud that will hurt us very much in the surrounding towns."

"Can you not obtain some one else to fill the place temporarily?" asked Bert.

"I do not think so. I cannot hit upon any one in the show who is suitable."

"Is the performance so difficult, then?"

"No; it is being shot out of a cannon. The principal requisites are nerve and confidence."

Bert had an inspiration.

"Why wouldn't I do?" he asked.

"You are not a girl. We have advertised a girl to appear, and if we disappoint the public it will hurt our business. I do not know, come to think of it, but you might fulfill the requirements in all other particulars but this—the most essential one. You are not a girl."

"No, but I could become one," said Bert, with sparkling eyes.

Mr. Bridgman looked at him as though he thought he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BERT BECOMES A GIRL.

"You could become a girl?" repeated Mr. Bridgman, after a moment's pause. "Was that what you said?"

"Precisely."

"I don't think I quite catch your meaning. Are you serious?"

"Never was more so in my life," replied Bert, enjoying the other's surprise.

"Let me explain," he continued; and, feeling that he could trust his companion, he told him of the fatal practical joke at Forest Heights, of his hurried flight, and how he came to put in an appearance at the barn at such an opportune time for Mabel Trescott.

Mr. Bridgman heard him through without comment. At the conclusion of the story, he said, simply, in response to Bert's anxious, questioning look:

"Well, my boy, I see no reason to withdraw my offer to befriend you. What I said stands good. But, now, what is this idea of yours?"

"I thought I would like to adopt a disguise," said Bert. "And, if I am going to do so, why not fix myself up as a girl, and take the job of the human projectile?"

"H'm!" said Mr. Bridgman, thoughtfully. "Do you think you could do it?"

"Certainly. You just said that what it required was nerve and confidence, and I think I've got a pretty good stock of those qualities."

"That is in your favor, then."

"Oh, I will be all right. You couldn't kill me with an ax. Just let me try it this afternoon."

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Bert. "I will try it before the performance opens, and, if I don't suit you, I will let it drop."

"Done!" exclaimed the other. "We will compromise on that understanding."

"Now, then, to get into my rig," began our hero. "For the first thing, I shall want a wig, and that is where the trouble crops up at once."

"H'm! Wait a bit; I think I can remove that difficulty. Come with me, and let me introduce you to Mademoiselle Jeanne. She will probably be able to relieve you, as she has wigs galore."

"Who is Mademoiselle Jeanne, if I may ask?" said Bert, as he accompanied his companion.

"She is one of our equestriennes—a Frenchwoman, and as vain as a peacock. Her dresses, wigs, etc., are innumerable. Let me tell her your story, and I wager she'll fix you up all right."

In another minute Bert had been introduced.

Mademoiselle Jeanne was a tall, slender woman, of middle age, though she did not appear so old, with pleasing features, sparkling blue eyes and vivacious manners.

Mr. Bridgman plunged into business at once, and soon had the lady deeply interested in his project.

It is not necessary to follow the subject farther in detail. Instead, let us take a look at Bert two hours later.

Bert in woman's garb. Bert, with his own hair clipped close to his skull by one of the circus hands, and a thick, heavy wig of yellow hair, formerly the property of Mademoiselle Jeanne, arranged in place on his head by that expert lady's deft fingers.

"Now, see what you think of yourself," she said, shoving a hand-glass into his grasp.

"Whew!" It was a long whistle of surprise from our hero's lips.

A strange face looked back at him from the glass—the face of a very good-looking young girl, with thick, golden hair. With the exception of the laughing eyes and the old smile at the corners of the mouth, there was nothing left of Bert Breeziway.

"Well, if that don't beat the deck!" ejaculated Bert.

"How do you like my work?" asked the lady, with a smile.

"Fine! It is just perfect! I'll remember you in my will, mademoiselle," said Bert.

"Oh, I hope I shall not have to wait as long as that!" laughed the equestrienne. "Now, you must have a name. What shall you call yourself?"

For answer, Bert sang, gayly:

"Sweet Rosie O'Grady, my dear little rose!

She's my steady lady, most ev'ry one knows.

And when we get married, how happy we'll be!

I love sweet Rosie O'Grady, and Rosie O'Grady loves me!"

"Miss Rosie O'Grady, at your service, mademoiselle," he added, with a bow.

"Good, good!" exclaimed the equestrienne, clapping her hands. "Capital! I might have depended on it that you would think of something like that. But here comes Monsieur Bridgman to see how you are getting along."

Mr. Bridgman also opened his eyes pretty wide at Bert's transformation. He was highly amused at first, and laughed heartily.

"Well, what kind of a girl do I make?" asked our hero. "Do you think they'll tumble to me?"

"Never!" said the circus man, emphatically. "Your make-up is perfection. I defy any one to discover your real sex in that rig."

"All right," said Bert. "Let's go off and try the cannon now, to see how we make out."

"How is Mademoiselle Queen Mabel, monsieur?" asked the equestrienne. "Is she any better?"

"I do not know. I was just going to take a look at her. We will all go in."

Accordingly, all three proceeded to Mabel's bedside. But if they hoped to witness any decided improvement over her condition of a few hours before, they were fated to disappointment.

She lay on the cot, with her eyes closed and apparently asleep. But occasionally she tossed uneasily from side to side, and muttered, barely loud enough to be audible:

"Oh, let me go! Please let me go! I will not tell on you! I promise I will not! Oh, now he has a knife! Now he has a pitchfork! Oh, see!"

It was evident that her mind was still wandering, and Mr. Bridgman shook his head.

"Poor little Mab will be unable to perform for days, perhaps weeks," he said. "If you can fill her place, Bert, it may mean the virtual saving of the season, for she is our biggest card in these parts."

"I'll do my prettiest," said our hero.

"What's this I hear?" exclaimed a small, slim man, bustling in. "Queen Mab sick?"

It was Mr. Sellers, proprietor of Sellers' Great Continental Circus and Monster Aggregation of Marvels. Or, rather, he was only part proprietor, as Mr. Bridgman, who acted as general manager, was almost an equal partner in the show.

In as few words as possible, he acquainted his partner with the state of affairs.

Mr. Sellers was considerably concerned about Mabel's illness, for the girl had been with the circus for several years, and the

proprietors had become as much attached to her as any other persons in the monster aggregation.

Mabel was an orphan, who had been picked up by the show. They had overtaken her—a shivering, wretched, pitiful little figure—plodding along the road, one wet, stormy night.

Mr. Bridgman, who chanced to be with the wagons, questioned the waif. All she could tell was that her name was Mabel Trescott, her parents were dead, and she had no other relatives, to her knowledge. "They had taken papa and mamma away, and she was going to find them."

The child did not realize then that she was an orphan; the understanding had come to her since.

Her forlorn plight went to the hearts of the circus people, and she was, forthwith, taken in and adopted by the show.

As soon as she grew old enough she manifested an eager desire to do something to earn her bread, and thus it was that she became the human projectile.

To return to the present: Mr. Sellers, on satisfying himself that everything possible was being done for Mabel, consulted with his partner as to what should be done in the unexpected situation.

He was informed of Bert's desire to take Mabel's place, and readily fell in with Mr. Bridgman's ideas.

Both partners repaired to the main tent to witness our hero's initial attempt. Of this we will at present say nothing farther than that it was satisfactory to both.

And so it came to pass that in the middle of the afternoon, Bert Breeziway, looking like any one but himself, a wealth of yellow hair falling down on his shoulders, and clad in a suit of spangled tights ran gayly into the circus ring of a tent packed to the uttermost with people who knew him well, unrecognized by any one.

"Well, I reckon this rather lays over anything I've known yet," he thought, as he looked around at the sea of faces turned toward him. "But now I must put some frills on, and astonish these natives a little. If I am going to be a girl, then it's just the bang-uppest kind of a girl they ever saw in all their lives!"

CHAPTER XIX.

CHESTER AND "SWEET ROSIE O'GRADY."

Bert felt that he was on his mettle, and must do his best. Failure would mean not alone his own discomfiture, but a stain on the reputation of the fair girl he had that morning rescued from her abductors.

But, as he had once performed the act already, he had no idea that he should fail.

Remembering the coaching he had received from Mademoiselle Jeanne, he bowed to the audience and threw kisses upon all sides.

On this, a little applause sprang up, but not much. People were chary of approval until they had witnessed the performance. Then, if it suited them, they would applaud.

"Oh, by George!" exclaimed Bert, suddenly. "There's the fellows, as I live!"

In the first row of reserved seats, looking out upon him from the spectators, were his late fellow-students of Forest Heights Academy. There they were, among others, Chester, Palmer, Dunton, and, rather to his surprise, even Bullard.

They were watching him intently, but with no sign of recognition.

"Don't know me in this rig, of course," chuckled our hero.

He walked across the ring, his spangled tights glittering with every movement, to where a cannon rested upon the ground.

This cannon was not the regulation piece of artillery. It was made of wood, painted black to resemble iron, and inside was a powerful spring, which could be released by pulling a lanyard. A charge of powder was fired at the same time, to make the act more thrilling.

The cannon was pointed upward at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

Bert jumped up, shoved his feet into the muzzle, and slid his body down inside the cannon up to his shoulders.

He had practiced the feat several times before the performance, so as to be able to do it deftly.

The audience was watching him with spellbound interest. This was an act that never failed to work them up to the highest pitch.

The man whose duty it was to fire the cannon stepped forward, the end of the lanyard in his hand.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"All ready," responded Bert.

"Everything all right?"

"Yes, all right."

"Here she goes, then!" exclaimed the other.

Stepping back quickly, he gave the lanyard a vigorous jerk.

Bang! There was a mighty report.

The body of Bert shot out of the cannon and upward through the air.

Followed by all eyes, it soared up and onward, describing a great curve in the air.

The velocity that had been imparted to the boy's body carried it across the tent. At the farther side its course curved downward, till it fell into a net spread to receive it.

A rope, depending from the ceiling of the tent, swung near the edge of the net. Bert caught it, and let himself down to the ground, with a run.

A storm of applause greeted the success of his performance. Hand-clapping and stamping of feet filled the air.

Bert stood and bowed his acknowledgments, throwing kisses on every side for a few moments. Then, still doing so, he ran out of the ring, and the curtains of the dressing tent closed behind him.

Behind the scenes he was congratulated on his successful performance by other members of the circus company.

He tore himself away from his well-wishers as soon as possible, however, for he had a new idea in his head he wished to carry out. This was to seek an interview with Charlie Chester, in the guise of Rosie O'Grady.

His motive for doing so was both serious and for amusement. He wished to give his chum some word of himself, and also to mystify Chester a little.

Accordingly, he donned the attire of Rosie O'Grady, which was a dress Mademoiselle Jeanne had given him, all Mabel Trescott's costumes being too small.

"Oh, I don't make a bad-looking girl," said Bert, surveying himself in a glass, when "all rigged up," as he phrased it.

"I'll wait till the show's over; then I'll lay for Chet."

He readily guessed that the academy boys would go back to school on their bicycles. Mabel was the possessor of a wheel, and he borrowed it for the occasion.

When the performance came to an end, he went outside, and poised himself in a spot where he could see the people as they came out.

Chester and the others were among the last to appear. They had lingered to go through the menagerie, viewing and discussing the various wild animals.

Bert's surmise proved correct, for they had left their wheels at a lemonade booth a short distance from the entrance to the tent. Hastily securing them, they mounted and dashed away.

Our hero was in the saddle in a trice, and spinning along after them.

But Bert was in a quandary. He wished to see Chester alone, but how was he to manage it? There were eight of the boys from the academy, and they all rode together. It was very likely that they would continue in the same order until school was reached.

Our hero cudged his brain a bit, and then decided upon a characteristic plan. The basis of his scheme was the fact that Chester was a swiftest rider of the company he was with.

Bert had turned into the same road as the boys, and was but a short distance in their rear. He put more speed into his pedaling and soon overtook them.

"You little boys don't think you can ride, do you?" he asked, disdainfully.

"Well, yes; we've got an idea a little that way," retorted Chester, while he and the others looked with surprise at the girl who addressed them.

"Well, then, you are mistaken. I defy one of you to overtake me!" exclaimed Bert, as he shot ahead.

"We'll take that defi. Come on, fellows, and show your scorching powers!" cried Chester.

This was what Bert intended. He understood his chum's nature well enough to be certain he would accept the challenge.

Chester, moreover, began to work his pedals with a will. In an instant he had pushed himself ahead of his companions and shot after the unknown girl who had defied him to overtake her.

This promised to be no easy task. When at the academy, Bert had been regarded as the fastest rider of all. And now, though

the skirt he wore somewhat impeded his movements, he was wheeling in almost his best form.

He turned and laughed at Chester, who was his nearest pursuer.

"Come on; come on! Why don't you get a move on you?" he cried, tauntingly. "I told you you didn't know how to ride."

"I'll be up with you in a minute," flung back Chester.

"Pshaw! You wouldn't get up to me in a year!"

"Wait and see."

"I will."

"I wish poor Bert Breeziway was only here now," thought Chet. "I'd like to see him run up against this one."

All the while he was wondering who could this girl be who was making herself so familiar. He did not believe she belonged in the neighborhood, for he did not remember having ever heard before of any one of her appearance and ways.

"Something funny about this business, anyway," was his decision.

Bert had now come to the last branch that ran off the main road before the academy was reached. He turned into it, and waited, with no little suspense, to see what Chester would do.

Chet promptly followed his example and turned into the branch road in pursuit.

"Hey, Chet, come on! Give it up!" cried his companions.

"Not much I won't! I don't give up so easily," was the sturdy response.

And the speaker bent forward over his handle-bar, and sought, but vainly, to put on more speed.

"Well, go ahead, if you will, then! But you'll have the race all to yourself!" cried Dunton.

He and the others did not turn into the branch road, but kept straight on for the academy.

This was exactly what Bert wanted. He now had an opportunity to speak to Chester in private.

Accordingly, he slackened his pace so that his chum might overtake him. This Chet quickly did.

"Aha! I knew I'd haul up to you!" he exclaimed, triumphantly. "Now, who is it that don't know how to ride?"

"You," retorted Bert, tranquilly.

"Didn't I give you a start and overtake you?"

"When I chose to let you. I want to say a few words to you in private. I have a message from Bert Breeziway."

"What! From Bert?" cried Chester, eagerly. "What is it? Tell me, quick!"

"Well, he told me to say that you were not to worry about him at all; that he fell into a piece of good luck a short time after leaving you, and is getting along finely."

"He is all right, then?" asked Chester, anxiously.

"He is all right—tiptop—never was better in his life."

"Do you expect to see him soon?"

"I may. Why?"

"If you do, I was thinking of giving you a message for him."

"What is it? If it should be anything of sufficient importance, I can make it my special business to see Bert about it."

"Well, I don't know whether that is worth while. But I might as well tell you, anyhow. It begins to look to me as if there was a put-up job in Bert's having to go away!"

"What!" exclaimed our hero, all attention at once.

"Yes, you see, Miss——"

"Miss O'Grady—Rosie O'Grady."

"That the name of a song."

"It's mine, too. Wasn't the song named after me?"

"I give it up. 'Sweet Rosie O'Grady,' eh? Well, you look it!"

"Never mind compliments. What were you going to tell me?"

"Well, you see, sweet Rosie, it looks to me as if Bullard, the fellow on whose account Bert went away——"

"Yes, I know; Bert told me the whole story. What about Bullard?"

"Well, it looks to me as if Bull was getting over that craziness of his mighty sudden."

"Is he over it now?"

"Not exactly. He seems to be all right at times, but whenever I am around, and he finds me watching him, he acts as if he was as bad as ever."

"You think he may be putting on?"

"I wouldn't be afraid to gamble on it. I know Bull."

"Still, he may be pretty bad. You can't always tell about lunatics, you know. They are very cunning at times."

"Yes, I know. Bull is very cunning all the time, lunatic or no

lunatic. I'm going to keep an eye on him, and see how things go."

"Very well. Do so. In the meantime, I will make it my business to see Bert and let him know what you have said. But, now, I must say good-by. It is growing toward night, and I must get back to the circus in time for the evening performance."

"Oh, you are Queen Mab, the human catapult, aren't you?"

"Yes. What made you guess it?"

"I was wondering why your face seemed familiar to me. I suppose that explains it. Give my respects to Bert, please."

"Certainly."

"Tell him I would like to see him a heap."

"I am afraid that could hardly be arranged just now. He is trying to keep away from wherever he is known."

"Is he disguised?"

"Well, yes—a little."

"Do you think I would know him if I saw him?"

"Well, no," said Bert, in the character of Rosie O'Grady, looking his chum squarely in the face, with a slight smile, "I hardly think you would."

CHAPTER XX.

SEVERAL CIRCUS PEOPLE.

Bert rode back to the circus tent, after parting with Chester, in a very thoughtful frame of mind.

In regard to Chester's news, Bert did not attach as much importance to it as might be supposed.

At bottom, Bert Breeziway was a boy of hard, sound common sense. His greatest fault was, perhaps, too great confidence in his own judgment.

Bert had himself been a witness of Bullard's behavior after the memorable practical joke that drove him from Forest Heights, and he believed it was genuine. He did not consider the bully possessed of sufficient smartness or a good enough actor to so successfully feign the emotions of severe fright and loss of mind.

Chester's suspicions he set down to an instance where the "wish was father to the thought," for he knew nothing would delight his faithful chum more than to find that the famous joke had not really had the fatal result represented.

Bert could have wished for nothing better, also; but, after turning the matter over as carefully as possible in his mind, he was compelled to reject the idea.

He had reached the great circus tent now, where the crowds were already beginning to gather for the evening performance.

Bert dismounted from his bicycle, and, pushing the wheel beside him, entered the performers' tent to dress for his act.

Just inside the entrance, he was surprised to hear a voice exclaim, in mournful accents:

"No; it is useless! She will not heed me; she will not give me any encouragement! Hang that skeleton! Curse the skin-and-bones!"

Bert stopped, and looked to see who was the author of these remarks. It was quite dark just inside the doorway of the tent, and he had some difficulty in making out the speaker.

But at that moment a man came along to light up, and by the aid of the new illumination Bert was at once able to gratify his curiosity.

The person he saw before him was the circus giant, who formed one of the side shows that traveled with the Great Continental.

The giant truly deserved the appellation, for he was fully eight feet tall, and broad in proportion.

On the circus posters he was billed in great letters as "Hugo, the Huge." But in private life, as if by the irony of fate, he was simply William Little.

On the present occasion Bert looked at him closely. There was a look of distress on the giant's face.

"You seem to be in trouble," said Bert, impulsively. "What is the matter? Can I do anything to help you?"

Hugo looked at him for a moment in indecision. But Bert assumed a sympathetic look, and, in his character of Rosie O'Grady, looked like a girl who could be trusted with a confidence.

Evidently, such was the giant's opinion, at any rate.

"You are the young lady who is acting in Queen Mab's place, aren't you?" he queried.

"Yes."

"Your name is Miss O'Grady?"

"It is. Can I do anything for you, sir?"

"No, I am afraid not. Nobody can do anything for me," said the giant, moodily.

"You are in trouble, then?"

"Yes—desperate trouble."

"Perhaps I might be able to suggest some plan for your relief if I knew the particulars," insinuated Bert.

"Oh, I don't know. I do not believe any one can help me. I am afraid my case is past help. The fact is," said the giant, "I am in love!"

"In love?" repeated Bert.

Somehow, such a confession in the case of the great being before him seemed supremely ridiculous. He had all he could do to suppress a laugh.

"May I venture to ask who is the fortunate lady?" he queried.

"It is Baby Bunting, the fat lady."

The fat woman! Again Bert was strongly tempted to laugh.

"I wish you luck," he said. "You have my best wishes."

But the giant shook his head mournfully.

"It is no use—no use!" he exclaimed. "She will not listen to my suit. I have a rival, and a favored one, as well. That is why I am so discouraged. Baby Bunting won't look at me because she's mashed on somebody else."

"Who is it?"

"The one she's dead gone on? Oh, the living skeleton."

If Bert had been tempted to laugh before, now he wanted to roar. His face was red with suppressed laughter.

Suddenly the giant had a new idea.

"You are not in a great hurry, are you?" he said. "Your act doesn't come on for some time yet."

"No, but I have to ride out with the grand entry at the beginning, you know."

"Oh, skip that. You can let it go this time. Come and see Baby Bunting. I want to show her to you."

Bert was nothing loath to gaze upon the fair—if fleshy—enslaver of the giant's heart. He accordingly accompanied him to that division of the tent where she was to be found.

"Baby Bunting" had been so named in a spirit of the wildest sarcasm.

She must have weighed fully four hundred pounds, if she weighed one. Her eyes were almost lost in the bulging fatness of her face; she had not only a double, but triple, chin; no neck at all, and was a mountain of jelly-like flesh.

She glanced at the two, as they approached her, favoring Bert with a look of languid interest, and nodding coldly at the giant.

"You see," whispered the latter to our hero, "she spurns me for that trash."

In the last words he alluded to the living skeleton, who was seated near the fat woman, conversing with her.

The living skeleton was as skeleton-like as he well could be. The outlines of his form followed the shape of his bones with startling exactness. A more striking contrast than he presented to Baby Bunting could hardly be imagined.

"Curse that bag of bones! He makes me sick, the mere sight of him!" exclaimed the giant, in low tones.

He could not calmly endure the sight of his rival enjoying the happiness forbidden to himself.

He touched Bert's arm, and they went out.

Once outside the apartment, the giant began to descant upon the glories of his rather large-sized ladylove.

After a while, Bert took leave of Hugo, who was already prepared to swear eternal friendship to him on account of the sympathetic interest Bert had manifested in his affairs and the readiness with which he had coincided with his views.

After leaving Hugo, Bert made haste to don the tights he wore during his performance as the human catapult.

After he was dressed, and thoroughly prepared for his appearance in public, Bert found he had still a little time before entering the ring. Accordingly, he went in to see Mabel.

He found her still in bed, of course, but propped up with pillows, in a sitting position, and looking much better than when he had last seen her. She was awake, and greeted him with delight.

"Oh, why did you not come in before?" she exclaimed. "I have been wanting to see you so much!"

"Have you?" asked Bert.

"Yes; I have been hearing lots about you."

"Nothing bad, I hope?"

"Oh, no; everything good. They tell me you have been doing my act."

"No objection, I hope?"

"Oh, no. I am very glad there is somebody who can do it so well, and just now when it is needed, too."

"Thanks for the compliment. And that reminds me—how did you know I was myself, so to speak?"

"They told me how you were fixed up, and what you looked like."

"Oh, they did? Would you have recognized me if they hadn't?"

"Never in the world. You are completely changed, and that head of hair would fool anybody, it looks so real. Who fixed you up?"

"Mademoiselle Jeanne."

"She knows how to do it. So you are appearing under my name, are you, and I get the credit for all your good work?"

"Oh, I don't mind that. I am only in this for a short time, and for the fun of the thing, you know. I am not trying to go into the business."

"If that's the case, maybe you'll be in it longer than you like. The doctor says I mustn't perform for some days, maybe weeks."

"Oh, that's all right. I'll fill your place until you are ready to take it back. Then, just the moment you want it again, it's yours."

They conversed together a short while longer. Bert did not venture to talk as freely as he would have liked. It would have pleased him to question the girl at length upon her early life, in the hope that the stray bits of information and remembrance she might possess would piece together to give some clew to the identity and motive of the secret enemy who had tried to have her put out of the way.

But in Mabel's ill and enfeebled state, he thought it best not to touch on the matter at all.

Presently he took leave of her, to enter the ring. His performance was again a decided success, the people who watched with eager eyes little dreaming that "Queen Mab, the Human Catapult," was identical with the scapegrace, Bert Breeziway, who a few days before had shaken the dust of Forest Heights from his feet, apparently forever.

CHAPTER XXI.

STRUCK DOWN FROM ABOVE.

"Miss O'Grady, will you grant me the pleasure of your company in a stroll?"

The speaker was Hugo, the giant of the Great Continental Circus. The person addressed was, of course, our hero, Bert Breeziway.

The time was the day succeeding the one on which occurred the incidents of the last chapter.

The circus had left Forest Heights behind, and passed on to a country village about fifteen miles distant, named Hazelton.

It was at this place that Bert and the giant stood in the great tent, conversing.

"Come with me, Miss O'Grady," said the giant, again. "See, it is a lovely day, and I am quite sure you will enjoy the stroll."

"Yes, I'll go."

The giant was pleased. He had taken a decided liking to Bert, or Rosie O'Grady, as he knew him. Indeed, our hero began to have a wild fear that he might supplant the fat woman, the beauteous Baby Bunting, in Hugo's affections.

This idea, however, was destined to be speedily displaced.

"Ah, this is what I like!" exclaimed the giant. "Here is where I appreciate the beauties of nature."

They had walked along a country road some distance and entered a stretch of woods. Great trees lifted their trunks on either side, their branches meeting overhead and making the road a leafy-covered aisle. Grass and bushes grew everywhere in profusion, flowers peeped forth on every hand, and the air was fragrant with the perfume of all.

"Ah, yes," repeated Hugo, "give me the beauties of nature!"

"They ain't in it with the beauties of Baby Bunting, are they?" put in Bert, slyly.

"Never, never!" exclaimed Hugo. "Perish the bare idea that aught can compare with her! She alone reigns supreme in my heart. When you speak of Baby Bunting, Miss O'Grady, you awaken sweet and tender sentiments in my breast," and the giant

placed a huge hand over his heart, and stood like a sentimental actor posing for an encore.

"How does your suit prosper?" asked Bert, with difficulty choking down a mighty guffaw.

"Slow, slow—very slow at present," answered Hugo. "But I think I may have hope."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Yes, I think I have hopes. I have reasons for thinking so."

"Ah!"

"I believe that base caricature of humanity, the living skeleton, is playing sweet Baby Bunting false—that he is deceiving her loving, trusting heart."

"That's tough."

"It is dastardly—shameful—despicable! It is just what one would expect from such an abandoned wretch, destitute of all the noble traits of mankind."

"What's his little game?"

"He is leading the idol of my heart to believe he is devoted to her, while, on the sly, he makes love to the bearded lady."

"I'd go for him."

"I intend to. I shall expose the wretch. At the same time I shall declare my undying affection to sweet Baby Bunting, and plead with her to give me her hand. If she consents, we will elope and get married at once."

"I'll help you, if you need any assistance," said Bert, scenting fun at once in the last idea.

"Thank you. You are a true friend. I appreciate your disinterested kindness," responded Hugo, wringing our hero's hand with gratitude and a grip that almost reduced it to a jelly.

They now emerged from the wood, and presently found themselves following a path that led along the base of a hill, or, rather, small mountain. At times the side of the elevation rose in an almost perpendicular wall beside them.

Though they little dreamed it, danger hung over them.

Their departure from the circus tent had been noted, and they had been under espionage since.

Two men had followed their every movement. But when they emerged from the woods, the pursuers drew off their track.

It was not with the intention of abandoning their task, however. They knew there was but one road Bert and the giant could take, unless they turned back, and they hurried forward to put a certain plan into operation.

They made a detour that put them in front of our friends, and hastily climbed a path up the side of the mountain, stopping finally at the height of a number of feet.

They had halted at one of the places where the mountainside was so steep that their position fairly overhung the path below.

Their purpose was not long in doubt, for they hastily gathered several rocks and large stones into a small pile before them. This had barely been done when Bert and the giant appeared in sight.

The two men looked at each other with grins of satisfaction.

"Wait till they are exactly under," said one.

"All right," rejoined the other. "I won't make no mistake."

On the shelf where they were they leaned forward, each with a stone in hand, and looked down upon their approaching victims.

Chatting gayly, Bert and the giant came on, wholly unconscious of their deadly peril. Presently they were directly under the men above.

"Now! Let her go!"

At the word, two stones simultaneously shot downward.

The aim was true.

The missiles struck Bert and Hugo, the giant, on their heads.

They at once stopped short in their tracks and pitched over to the ground like dead persons.

"We've killed 'em!" exclaimed one of the scoundrels, somewhat fearfully.

"All the better," replied the other, with a callous laugh. "In the case of the gal, it will save us trouble. I'll be glad if she is dead already, so we don't have to finish her off. Come! We've got to go down and see!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A MYSTERIOUS PIECE OF BUSINESS.

The two miscreants whose deliberate action had inflicted probably serious injury, perhaps death—they troubled themselves little

which—upon Bert Breeziway and Hugo, the circus giant, proceeded to carry their fell purpose to its completion.

By the same path they had ascended to their position on the side of the mountain they made their way down again to the path below. In a few moments they were bending over their victims.

"They ain't dead," announced the more hardened ruffian. "Small loss if they were."

"I'm glad, anyhow," declared his pal. "I don't want no blood on my hands."

"You're too soft for this biz, Jim. Never mind; you'll get broke in after a while, same as I am. Well, as long as the gal ain't dead, it means more work for us. We've got to carry her to the shanty. Grab hold of her feet, while I take the shoulders, and come along."

The two ruffians seized Bert in the manner designated and bore him off. Hugo, the giant, was left undisturbed where he had fallen.

How long an interval had elapsed since he had been stricken down, Bert Breeziway had no means of knowing on his awakening.

The first thing he realized was that he was in darkness; the second thing was that he had a splitting headache. Then, by degrees, he made out his situation.

He lay upon his back, bound hand and foot. He was farther confined by being secured to the table, or bench, on which he was lying.

"Well, I am in the hands of the Philistines this time for sure," reflected Bert. "They've got me, and now the question is, what do they propose to do about it?"

Presently he was conscious that the place was growing lighter. Then a lantern suddenly appeared, rapidly approaching.

The lantern was held over Bert's face for a moment, as the man who bore it looked down upon him.

The boy returned his scrutiny eagerly, but without result. The other wore a rough cloth mask over his face, that effectually concealed his features.

He hung the lantern on a hook in the ceiling, directly over Bert.

By this light the boy was enabled to gain a better idea of his surroundings.

He saw now that he was in a room with roughly-finished walls and ceiling. The joists and beams were not boarded over, but left exposed. The dimensions of the place he could not make out, owing to his position.

The man who had hung up the lantern turned his head, and remarked, evidently for the benefit of some person in the back-ground:

"She's come to, captain. What's the next thing to be done?"

"It is the same, is it not—the girl from the circus—she who is shot out of a cannon?"

"The very same one. Come over and have a look at her, captain."

"Oh, that is not necessary."

"But you can satisfy yourself."

"It is quite unnecessary. Your assurance that it is right satisfies me," answered the same voice as before.

Bert began to feel interested and curious as to this latter personage, who was evidently afraid to trust himself, even though masked, before the supposed girl's eyes, for fear of recognition, now or at some future time.

"I would just like to get a look at that fellow's face, even with a cloth over it," thought our hero. "Something tells me he is the chap at the bottom of the whole business."

These thoughts had barely passed through Bert's mind when the "captain" spoke again.

"Is Meg here, as I ordered?" he asked.

"She is in the other room."

"Good. I will step in there a moment, as I have something to say to her."

Whatever the nature of the unknown's communication, it occupied some minutes, and he was absent quite a little time.

The captain then re-entered the apartment—or, at least, Bert judged by sounds that he did, for he did not see him. Another person, however, approached our hero.

This was a woman, and, as she bent over him, Bert saw at once that she was a cruel and relentless character.

She was, apparently, over fifty years of age, with a broad face, and a great hooked nose, that reminded one irresistibly of a vul-

ture's beak. Her eyes were small and piercing, and her face was scamed and seared with lines of exposure and dissipation.

She was dressed in very slovenly fashion, and her hair was half down upon her neck.

She stared down into Bert's eyes, and parted her lips in a hideous grin, displaying rows of great, yellow, fang-like teeth.

"Aha, my beauty!" she exclaimed. "So you are given into my hands to take care of, are you? Oh, I will take good care of you!"

"Let's go into the other room, boys," said the captain. "I want to have a talk with you."

The men accordingly passed out of the apartment, and Bert and the ogress were left alone.

The latter produced a whip, with a short, heavy handle and several lashes—a veritable cat-o'-nine-tails.

"Oh, yes, you are given into my hands to take care of! Take care of as I see fit!" she exclaimed, gloatingly. "And I will take care of you, ha, ha!"

"I will give you a little taste of this," continued the woman, shaking the whip, that there might be no mistake to her meaning. "I shall laugh to see it sink into your soft flesh like a red-hot iron. That's how it will sting."

"Well, you she-devil!" exclaimed the boy to himself. "For sheer, downright fiendishness, you beat anybody I ever knew."

"Let me pull your dress down a little, so you will feel the lash the sharper!" exclaimed the woman, beginning to suit the action to the word.

A thrill of liveliest alarm ran through Bert.

He comprehended a new danger at once. Let the woman get but one look at his broad shoulders and muscular chest, and she would know it was no girl before her.

The discovery that he was in disguise would certainly seal his fate. His villainous captors, understanding that he knew something, and not willing to risk how much or little it might be, would make sure of their own safety by promptly putting him out of the way.

And here he must lie, bound and helpless, for them to do their will upon.

The thought threw him into a frenzy of desperation. He strained at the cords that bound him—as, indeed, he had been straining all along—in a mighty attempt to free himself. But the effort was in vain; his bonds were too strong to be thus cast off, and he was too tightly pinioned to twist himself loose.

Rap, rap, rap!

Suddenly there came a loud, vigorous pounding at the door.

The captain and his men came rushing in.

Again the knocking was heard, with a peremptory tone that indicated the determination of whoever made it to have an answer.

"What do you want?" called out the captain.

"Open the door!" came back the answer.

"What for?"

"I want to come in."

"You can't come in!"

"If you don't open the door, I'll break it down!"

"What for?"

"I want the young girl you've got prisoner in there."

"We have no prisoner, but there's a half dozen men in here who'll make things warm for you if you don't get out!"

"You can't give me any bluffs. I know you have a young girl prisoner, and I'm going to throw down the door and have her out, I don't care if there are twenty men inside!" came the defiant answer, in a voice Bert recognized as that of Hugo, the giant.

"Hurrah!" he exclaimed, inwardly. "Hugo is true blue. He has followed me up till he's found me, and now he's on the war-path for fair. He is a whole host in himself, and there is going to be some fun when he starts in at rough-and-tumble with these people."

There were, indeed, lively times in prospect.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CIRCUS GIANT TO THE RESCUE.

"Confound this troublesome meddler!" exclaimed the leader of the band of miscreants. "I would give a little to learn how he came to find us out. You two must have been followed."

He turned, with lowering brow, upon a certain couple among his men.

"No, we were not, captain," replied one, stoutly. "There was no one to follow us. No one was with the girl but the big fellow, and him we knocked out at the same time as her."

"Well, that is most probably the big fellow at the door, and he don't act much as if he was knocked out," said the captain, dryly.

Hugo was, indeed, pounding upon the door again with his fists. Rap, rap, rap! came the sound of his sledge-hammer blows.

"Open the door, if you don't want it broken down!" he thundered.

"Break it down, if you dare!" cried the captain.

Hugo was prompt to accept the challenge.

He threw his giant body against the door with all his might. It was heavy and strongly made, but had never been put up to withstand such a fairly irrepressible onslaught.

The door quivered for a moment under the shock of the giant's strength, then gave way. The screws of the hinges were torn out of the wood, and down to the floor it went, with a terrific crash.

And into the room, like an avenging fury, sprang Hugo, the Huge, the circus giant.

With yells of rage, the men rushed to attack him. Too late they found out their mistake, and the kind of foe with whom they had to deal.

"Oh, you want to fight, do you?" exclaimed Hugo. "Well, I'll try and oblige!"

The first man he seized, lifted him off his feet and actually hurled him bodily at another. Both rascals went to the floor, pretty well shaken up and bruised.

The next two Hugo caught, one in each of his giant arms, and, swinging them off the floor, knocked their heads together until they saw more stars than they had ever seen in the heavens in all their lives.

Having finally decided that the fellows had had enough, Hugo hurled them from him, and, like Alexander, looked around for more worlds to conquer.

But there was no one else to oppose him. The captain and the woman, Meg, were the only remaining persons, and they, deeming discretion the better part of valor, had already taken themselves off.

Hugo waited a moment, and, as there seemed no one else eager to fight him, he called out:

"Are you here, Miss O'Grady?"

"Right here," responded Bert, with alacrity.

It was the work of but a minute for the giant to pull out his knife and slash in twain the cords that confined Bert's limbs and held him down to the table.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, solicitously.

"No; just a little stiff, from lying in one position so long. I will be all right in a few minutes," replied Bert.

"Can you stand?"

"Oh, yes."

"I am sorry I let those fellows off so easy," he said.

"I guess you shook 'em up pretty well," laughed Bert, who, by twisting his head, had been able to witness Hugo's vigorous operations.

Despite the rough treatment they had received, the rascals were not so much injured but that they made themselves scarce without delay, else the giant might have proceeded to vent his indignation upon their persons again.

"Well, I guess I am able to get on all right now," suggested Bert. "Shall we be moving?"

"I'm ready," replied Hugo. "There isn't any attraction to hold me here."

Once outside, Bert turned and gave it a glance, with natural curiosity to know in what sort of place he had been confined.

The shanty was a rude affair, and had originally been erected evidently for campers-out. It was in a wooded country, but the ground was cleared of trees for a space around it. A brook rippled along several rods from the building.

The giant set off along a faint path through the woods, and Bert followed. He was compelled to walk behind, as the way was too narrow to admit of their proceeding abreast. This, however, did not prevent their interchanging words now and then.

"How did you come to find me?" was naturally Bert's first question. "I think that was a brilliant piece of work."

"Oh, not exactly," said Hugo, modestly. "It was more good luck than good management."

"Tell me how it happened."

"Well, in the first place," began the giant, "my head is pretty

hard, and that is why, after I was knocked out, I did not lie senseless as long as those fellows probably expected.

"As soon as I came to, and saw you were missing, my first idea was that you had been taken away, for I did not believe you would desert me of your free will. I was, therefore, eager to go after you at once.

"Chance favored this design. The spot where we had been stricken down was of sandy soil, and in it I saw the footprints of two men. It is true, they might not have any connection with the affair, but I took the chances that they had, and results justified the conclusion.

"I walked along the road a distance in the direction the foot-steps pointed, and then I began to feel at a loss. The prints were visible for but a few rods, and I had no means of determining how soon the men had left the road.

"But in this perplexity I unexpectedly came upon a child, a little boy of six or seven. The little fellow looked considerably frightened.

"Well, to shorten the story, the child told me that he had seen two men carrying a sick lady along the path. He knew the lady was sick because she just lay still, and didn't move. He happened to be playing in the woods at the time, out of sight from the path, and so the men did not see him. Had they done so, they would have taken him along with them, or have done something else to prevent his spreading his story.

"He told me that while he watched them, the men turned off the path into the woods. I examined the spot he indicated, and found a faintly-defined path.

"I had barely made this discovery, when a frantic woman came hurrying along, and at sight of the child snatched him up, with a glad cry. He had wandered from her side almost an hour before, while she was out for a stroll in the country, and the anxious mother had been searching for him ever since. Had I come along the road ten minutes later, I should never have met the child, and would have missed the information that enabled me to find you. The whole thing was providential."

"It was," said Bert, thoughtfully.

"Well," resumed Hugo, "I followed the path I had discovered, and it finally brought me to the shanty. I felt sure you were there, and so you were."

"And am not now, thanks to you," added Bert. "I will not forget this great service, and shall repay it at the first opportunity."

"Do you really mean that?" asked Hugo, eagerly.

"Of course I do."

"You can repay me very soon, if you will."

"I will gladly do so. Tell me how."

"Well, you know, to-morrow we appear at Chester; it is quite a good-sized place—in fact, a city."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, I am going to end this suspense in regard to that despicable living skeleton at once. To-morrow I shall propose to Baby Bunting. If she accepts me, I shall ask her to elope and get married at once. Will you help me?"

"Like a shot," responded Bert.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LIVING SKELETON IS "SAT ON."

Mr. Sellers and Mr. Bridgman were promptly acquainted with the afternoon adventure, and were, of course, surprised and shocked. At Bert's request, they consented to keep the matter to themselves, as our hero feared that if it were told to other members of the company they might mention it in Mabel's presence, and he did not want it to get to her ears.

Mr. Sellers declared, however, that he should at once engage the services of one or more of the best detectives money would obtain, and see if the matter could not be ferreted out. Both he and Mr. Bridgman inclined to Bert's theory that these mysterious assaults had something to do with Mabel's unknown early life, and believed that following them up might eventually lead to the solving of the mystery of her birth and identity.

It should be explained that Mr. Bridgman had desired to leave her at Forest Heights, in the hands of competent nurses, with arrangements by which she would receive the best of care.

But the little maiden insisted upon being taken along with the circus, and Mr. Bridgman and every one in the company had

grown so used to deferring to Queen Mab's wishes that there was nothing to do but honor her again, as usual. The manager engaged a couple of trained nurses, however, and under their care Mabel improved rapidly.

On the occasion of his present call Bert found her sitting up in an invalid's chair and in the best of spirits.

"I shall be dancing around again before you know it," she said.

"I am glad to hear it," replied Bert. "When you do I shall say good-by to the circus and you will take your own place again."

"Oh, no, you won't," retorted Mabel. "I was talking to Mr. Bridgman about you only to-day. He says he is interested in you and he doesn't propose to lose you just yet. When I get able to perform my act again it won't make any difference. Mr. Bridgman says he will find something for you to do in the ring, if he has to have us both shot out of the cannon, one after the other."

"That's kind of him. I'm much obliged," said Bert.

"Oh, you're appreciated; that's all."

After some further chat Bert left Mabel.

Late that evening, when, after his performance in the ring, he made his way to the dressing-room, Hugo was waiting for him.

He rushed at Bert with outstretched arms.

"Come with me, quick, Miss O'Grady," he exclaimed. "The best thing in the world for me has happened."

"What is it?"

"You know I told you that while that scum of mankind, the living skeleton, was leading my adored one to believe he cared for her, on the sly he was making love to the Bearded Lady?"

"Yes, I remember. Why?"

"Well, now I've got him. I have discovered him and the Bearded Lady in a nice little *tête-à-tête*, and I am going to undeceive sweet Baby Bunting by letting her see them and hear their remarks."

"That's not a bad scheme. When did you make the discovery?"

"But a few moments ago; and I came here at once, because I have a presentiment that I shall want your help before the night is over."

"Maybe you've made a mistake. Suppose the Skeleton and the Bearded Lady break off before you get back?"

The giant's face fell, but he brightened up in a moment.

"Oh, there's no danger of that. They're good for an hour yet."

"Well, I will be with you in a few moments, as soon as I can change my dress."

Bert retired to divest himself of his ring costume, and shortly came forth as Rosie O'Grady in street attire.

"Now I will go with you," he said.

They hurried away to where the side shows of the circus were, and soon found themselves in the presence of Baby Bunting.

The Fat Woman was alone and her face bore a sulky look. She regarded Hugo with a crushing glance as she saw his intention to speak to her.

"Fair Baby Bunting," began the giant, "why are you alone? Where is your companion, the Living Skeleton?"

"I don't know," returned the Fat Woman. "Why should I care where he is—or you, either?"

"Do you wish to know where he is?"

"No, I don't!" snapped the fleshy one.

"I thought perhaps you might like to view the pretty little love scene between him and the Bearded Lady."

The Fat Woman started as though stung. Her indifference vanished in a moment.

"The Bearded Lady!" she exclaimed. "I don't believe it."

"Seeing is believing. I can show you if you will look."

Baby Bunting stood up.

"Go on and show me," she said.

The giant led the way and she followed to another and smaller division of the tent. Hugo did not enter, but stationed the Fat Woman at a spot where she, and themselves as well, could command a view of the interior.

There were two persons within. They were the Living Skeleton and the Bearded Lady. They sat as close together as it was possible to squeeze.

The Fat Woman grated her teeth at the sight. But if this enraged her, what can be said of the words of endearment that reached her ears?

"My ownest tootsey-wootsey!" said the Bearded Lady.

"My sweetest popsy-wopsy!" declared the Living Skeleton.

Then they put their lips together, and there was the sound of a smack.

"Fools!" hissed the Fat Woman.

The giant favored Bert with a look of delight.

But there was worse to come.

"Do you know, tootsey-wootsey, I was a little afraid about you one time?" said the Bearded Lady.

"Afraid? About what?" asked the Skeleton.

"I was afraid you thought too much of the Fat Woman."

"What, that big lump of fat? Not on your life. I was only having a little fun with the big fool. I saw she was stuck on me, and I only wanted to jolly her along a little. She ain't in it with you, ducky-darling."

"Oh, the despicable, false-hearted wretch!" hissed the Fat Woman, between her teeth. "I could kill you for that!"

"I only wish I could hold you on my lap, sweetsey-weetsey," said the Skeleton; "but, alas! that pleasure is denied me."

"No," rejoined the Bearded Lady. "I am afraid I should break you in two if I should try to sit on you."

The words gave the Fat Woman an inspiration.

With a quickness of movement Bert did not believe her capable of she rushed into the tent, hurled the Bearded Lady aside with one hand, and threw the Living Skeleton to the ground with the other.

Then she carefully and deliberately planted her huge figure upon the prostrate man's stomach.

"I'll sit on you!" she exclaimed. "You vile, despicable wretch! I'll sit on you as you ought to be sat on! Yes, yes; I'll sit on you and break you in two!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ELOPEMENT OF THE GIANT AND THE FAT WOMAN.

"You despicable wretch, you base deceiver, you infamous stealer of women's hearts and trafficker in their affections, you— Oh, I could sit on you, and sit on you, and sit on you!"

Each time the Fat Woman said "sit on you" she bounced up and came down upon the abdomen of the unfortunate Living Skeleton like a ton weight.

"Oh, oh!" he gasped, "you will kill me sure!"

By this time the Bearded Lady, who had been standing by, aghast at the proceedings, thought fit to interfere.

Approaching the Fat Woman she assumed a threatening attitude and said, menacingly:

"Get off him!"

"Now there'll be some fun," thought Bert Breeziway, who, with Hugo, the giant, was an amused witness of the scene.

But the Fat Woman merely favored the Bearded Lady with a glance of lofty contempt.

The latter, emboldened, advanced nearer, and repeated, with a more menacing expression:

"Get off him."

"Get out, you, or I'll pull your whiskers out!" exclaimed Baby Bunting. "You ought to be ashamed to show your face! You ought to be tarred and feathered! You ought to be roasted alive, you deceitful thing!"

"Get off of—" began the Bearded Lady, though not so aggressively as before; but the Fat Woman cut her short.

"Do you want me to throw you down and sit on you, too?" she exclaimed, making a motion to rise and with such a business-like air that the bewhiskered one retreated in alarm.

"Won't you please get off me, dear?" pleaded the wretched Living Skeleton, in abject tones. "You really have no idea how heavy you are."

"Haven't I. Well, I have some idea how base you are, scoundrel!" exclaimed the Fat Woman, wrathfully. "I have found you out now, you soulless wretch, you deceiver! Oh, you cur, you snake, you reptile! Oh, give me a man!"

Here was Hugo's chance. Like a flash he took advantage of it.

"Here he is, sweet Baby Bunting, if you will but have him!" he exclaimed.

"What?" gasped the Fat Woman.

"You say, 'give you a man,' and it gives me supreme bliss to offer myself. Be mine, darling, and make me the happiest person in the world!"

And the giant dropped on one knee before the lady of his heart.

The Fat Woman looked at him in surprise.

It was clear from her face that she had not expected any such avowal. But it was equally clear that she was not altogether displeased.

She slightly shifted her position on the Living Skeleton. That unhappy wretch groaned and she sat on him a little harder.

"Fair Baby Bunting, I have long admired you from a distance," said the giant. "In secret I have long worshipped at your shrine. Be mine and make me the happiest of men! Elope with me! Let me take you to the parson, and we will be made one."

In his earnestness Hugo forgot that there were listeners to his proposal.

"You want me to elope?" asked the Fat Woman.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It is a pet idea of mine. I think it is the nicest way to get married."

"When—now?"

"Well—er—not exactly," said Hugo. "I had fixed on to-morrow night."

A look of decision came into the Fat Woman's eyes.

"If you want me you can take me," she said, "but it must be to-night. One man has played with me; I will not let another."

"Well, I thought to-morrow night," said Hugo, taken aback at such a prompt decision. "We will be at Chester and—"

"Now or never!" said Baby Bunting.

The giant looked at Bert.

"I think I should take Baby Bunting at her word," said our hero. "It is bad manners to keep a lady waiting."

"All right; to-night, then," said Hugo.

"I am ready; but if you want me you will have to take me," said the Fat Woman.

She looked up at the giant with a smile that seemed to say, "I know you can't."

But she did not credit him with the strength he possessed.

"I'll take you," he said, and stooping down lifted her bodily in his strong arms, big as she was.

With his burden he marched out of the tent, and strode away from the circus grounds toward the village, Bert at his side.

"We will get a carriage," said the giant.

"No," declared the Fat Woman; "no carriage. If you want me you must carry me to the minister."

"All right," said Hugo, manfully.

Well was it for him that he was a giant, with a giant's strength.

He walked along as fast as he could with his ponderous burden, and Bert kept pace with him.

"This is the gayest old elopement I ever heard of," thought our hero.

The Fat Woman had a shawl over her head, which she had hastily snatched up as she was borne out.

Presently they reached the streets of the village.

The giant evidently had his work laid out. Perspiration was streaming down his face, and he was becoming exhausted with his ponderous burden.

He gave Bert a look that said:

"I can't hold out much longer."

At that moment a man came along. Bert accosted him on the instant.

"Where does the nearest minister live?" he demanded.

The man stared at the oddly-assorted trio.

"Minister?"

"Yes; minister, parson, priest—anybody who can marry people. Where does the nearest one live?"

"Twelve blocks straight ahead. It's the Reverend Mr. Starchy; his name's on the door."

"Thanks!" and Bert bolted down the street on the instant.

Straight onward he ran. He dashed along at high speed, totally forgetful of his skirts and the fact that he was supposed to be a young lady.

Fortunately there were few pedestrians abroad, and no one witnessed the startling conduct of "Miss Rosie O'Grady."

At last Bert had traversed the prescribed number of blocks. Keeping his eyes open he saw, a few houses further on, a door-plate bearing the name he sought.

A vigorous pull at the bell brought to the door a tall, spare man.

"This is Mr. Starchy?" asked Bert.

"I am the Reverend Mr. Starchy, yes."

"You are just the person I want. Come with me, please."

Before the minister knew what had happened Bert had grasped him by the arm, pulled him out upon the sidewalk and was hurrying along in the direction of the giant and his burden.

"What—what—" began the minister, excitedly.

"Pardon my rudeness, but it is important, very important," said Bert.

"But, my dear young lady, I haven't got my hat on. I must go back after it. And this is the coat I wear only in the house, too. I always change it when I go into the street."

"Let the coat and hat go this time, for once," urged Bert. "This is a very, very important matter."

"It must be some poor creature dying and anxious to have a last prayer said," thought the clergyman, impressed by his earnestness.

Bert guessed what was passing in his mind, and wondered what he would say when he discovered the real reason for haste. Then he thought of Hugo staggering along under the weight of the Fat Woman, and the whole matter of the "elopement" struck him in such a ludicrous light that he could not refrain from bursting into a loud laugh.

Thoroughly startled, the clergyman turned and darted a look of apprehension at his companion.

A thrill of alarm shot through him. The whole circumstance was so strange; the suddenness of the call, Bert's importunity, the lateness of the hour. And now this apparently causeless laugh! What did it all mean?

There could be but one solution in the clergyman's mind.

"Merciful goodness!" he asked himself, "am I in the clutch of a maniac? If so, may heaven protect me!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN ELEPHANT ON THE RAMPAGE.

The Reverend Mr. Starchly was hardly to be blamed for his fear that Bert was a maniac. Our hero's actions were so strongly at variance with his assumed character as to favor any startling supposition.

But Bert himself had no idea of the minister's thoughts as he hurried along. He was thinking instead of the giant and his innamorata.

"She is crazy, she is surely insane!" thought the clergyman. "Wonder if she would go so far as to turn on me and tear me to pieces; one can never tell what these maniacs will do. Was there ever such a situation? Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

He would have turned and bolted for home at once, but was afraid such an action would draw on him the very attack he dreaded.

And all this time Bert, with a grasp on his arm, was hurrying the wretched man along.

At last they came in sight of Hugo.

That luckless eloper was all but played out. He was so exhausted he could go no further.

He had backed up against a building, where he leaned, still desperately holding fast to the Fat Woman.

"Oh, if Miss O'Grady would only come!" he said to himself again and again. "I can't stand this thing much longer. I shall have to let her drop in a minute or two, I know I shall!"

The perspiration stood out on his forehead in big beads, and his body was as wet with it as though he had just been pulled out of the river.

As to Baby Bunting, she seemed to extract a huge amount of enjoyment from the situation. The efforts of the giant gave her much amusement. Was it not because he wanted her badly that he was doing this thing?

"It's no use," thought the giant. "I've got to let her drop. I can't hold out any longer."

Then he thought of how the Living Skeleton would grin at such an outcome.

The reflection made him grit his teeth with fiercer determination.

"No, I'll be hanged if I'll let that bag of bones have the laugh on me! I guess I can stand it a few minutes yet."

It was at that moment Bert and the minister appeared.

No dying wretch ever welcomed the approach of those who were coming to save his life with more heartfelt gratitude than Hugo did theirs.

"Thank heavens!" he exclaimed. "You have saved me from lifelong sorrow, Miss O'Grady. Tell him to be quick, please."

The minister was staring at them in perplexity.

Bert turned to him.

"Quick!" he exclaimed. "Marry these people!"

"Wh—what?"

"Marry them—make them man and wife."

"Was—was this what you wanted me for?"

"Of course. You're a minister, ain't you? Go ahead."

"But I thought it was somebody sick or dying, or—"

"Well, it wasn't, and what's the difference?"

"But I can't marry them. I have left my book behind. How can I read the marriage service?"

Here was a crushing blow. The giant fairly wilted and almost let the Fat Woman drop.

But Bert was equal to the emergency.

"Don't you know enough of the text by heart to marry them without the book?"

"I've got two ten-dollar bills in my pocket for you if you can," exclaimed Hugo.

The clergyman brightened up at once. Whether the fee had anything to do with it we would not venture to say.

"Yes, yes, of course. I guess I can do it—I am sure I can."

He began to repeat the marriage service and said it through to the end.

The giant had taken care to provide a ring, and when all was over the Reverend Mr. Starchly pocketed his twenty dollars with considerable satisfaction.

"Now, dear," said the newly-made wife, "just carry me back again and we will—"

"Carry you back again!" exclaimed the giant. "Shades of suffering Israel! not on your photograph, madam! If there isn't any way you can ride back you can make up your mind to walk!"

It is needless to observe that the elopement and marriage of the giant and Fat Woman excited the liveliest interest and amusement among the members of the Great Continental Circus.

When the story came out on their return they were overwhelmed with congratulations. The incident of how the Living Skeleton had been "sat on" also got around and he was the laughing-stock of the show for a month.

Bert, having assisted his friend in bringing his love affairs to a happy termination, looked about for something else to interest himself in. Circumstances decided him in his choice.

The Great Continental numbered among its properties a half-dozen elephants. Moving mountains of flesh, yet docile and obedient as children, their popularity with the patrons of the circus, both young and old, but more especially the young, never waned.

The elephant trainer was a man named Moses Howard, but commonly referred to simply as "Moses." He was an undersized man, but his limbs were like bars of steel, and his strength was surpassing for one of his small proportions.

He was absolutely fearless and ruled the elephants with autocratic sway. Did one of them for a moment hesitate to obey a command he would repeat it in a sharp voice, and then, if not instantly heeded, would catch up a pitchfork and run at the beast with the utmost intrepidity.

It was about a month after the marriage of Hugo and his beloved Baby Bunting that Bert became really acquainted with the elephant trainer.

During this time Mabel had got quite well. She had not resumed her circus performances, however, though Bert promptly offered to sever his connection with the show if he stood in her way.

Mabel would not hear of this; she said they could perform together and it would prove a double attraction.

But Mr. Sellers had other views for her. In her life with the circus the girl's education had been neglected, and the proprietor wished to send her to a girl's boarding school for a few years in order to remedy the deficiency. Even if she intended to follow the circus profession he felt that she must have some education.

Mabel was a sensible enough little lady to recognize the truth of this view, and readily acquiesced in it, much as she disliked to leave all her friends in the Great Continental.

So it was decided that she should go, but that a few weeks would be necessary to make proper preparations.

During this interval it was that Bert struck up an intimacy with the elephant trainer.

Coming into the presence of the great beasts one afternoon he found Moses having trouble with them.

The elephants do not seem to be behaving as well as usual," he remarked.

"No," replied Moses. "They've got the very mischief in them to-day, especially Tip there."

He indicated with a nod the largest and most unruly animal of the lot.

Tip, or Tippoo Tib, was the latest addition to the menagerie, having been purchased by Mr. Sellers but a few weeks before, and, in the words of Moses, was not yet thoroughly "broken in."

"You don't mean to say he was wild when you got him?" asked Bert.

"Oh, no; not at all. The old man got him from another circus. But he knows there's been a complete change—elephants are smart—and he thinks maybe he can cut up with me a little; wants to find out what I'm made of. I'll show him quick enough," added the trainer, grimly.

"He will break out, you think, then?"

"He will, sooner or later."

"Don't you ever feel afraid of them?"

"Never. Just as soon as I get that way," said Moses, earnestly, "I had better get out of this business on the jump. If I don't my funeral will follow in short order. Never let wild animals know you are afraid of them; make them afraid of you."

"How about governing them with kindness?" asked Bert.

"Kindness is all right in some cases, but for myself I would never trust any obedience that did not have fear at the bottom of it. Just look at that fellow now."

He indicated Tippoo Tib, who was regarding them with wicked little eyes, as though he actually understood all that was said.

It was in the division of the tent devoted to the menagerie that the conversation occurred.

Cages containing lions, tigers, leopards and other animals were ranged along the walls. The elephants stood in a row, chained forefoot and hindfoot to stakes driven in the ground. Tip was at one end of the line.

"He does look wicked," said Bert.

"Oh, he means mischief, beyond a doubt. He intends to break out soon. I would just as lief he would do it now, so that I could have it over with him once for all."

The trainer's wish was gratified more promptly than he had dreamed.

Tip began to strain at his chains with savage intensity, as though determined to break loose.

"Stop that; be quiet!" ordered Moses, peremptorily.

The animal looked straight at him with his little eyes, and pulled more vigorously at his chains.

The trainer knew that the time of the battle for supremacy had arrived.

Tip's restlessness was communicating itself to the other elephants, who were beginning to show signs of uneasiness.

Moses knew this must be stopped at once.

"Be quiet, I tell you," he cried, catching up a pitchfork and approaching the rebel.

At that moment he tripped over a stake and fell to the ground, just in front of Tip. Bert uttered a cry of horror:

"He'll be killed!"

The trainer tried to roll out of the way, but his coat caught on a stake and held him. The pitchfork had fallen from his hands and he was helpless.

Trumpeting shrilly, Tip rushed forward to bring his huge foot down on the prostrate man and trample the life out of him.

Moses looked up at Bert.

"Quick!" he gasped. "Take the pitchfork and jab it into him hard. Don't be afraid. It's my only chance."

Bert did not hesitate for the fraction of a second. Catching up the weapon he rushed fearlessly at the angry beast, though in his heart he believed the attempt was useless, and that the lives of both the trainer and himself would be sacrificed to the furious animal.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW THE ELEPHANT RAN AWAY.

With a desperation born of the knowledge that two lives hung upon the outcome of his effort, Bert rushed at the rebellious Tip. Lunging forward with the pitchfork he drove the shining prongs once, twice, thrice into the elephant.

The blood spurted forth as he withdrew the weapon, and the sharp forks were dyed with it.

"Back! back! get back!" cried Bert, loudly.

He afterward wondered that the elephant did not seize him

with his trunk, swing him high in the air and then dash him to the earth. But Tip did nothing of the kind.

He recoiled from the sharp prongs of the pitchfork, evidently having no desire to feel it further.

This gave Moses a chance to scramble to his feet and take a hand in the battle.

"Here, let me have it!" he exclaimed, and catching the weapon from Bert's grasp he ran forward and jabbed it again and again through Tip's tough hide.

The animal did not attempt to fight back. He trumpeted shrilly, but it was evidently with fear, and he seemed desirous only of getting away from the sharp points of the pitchfork.

"There, I guess that will do," said Moses, as, satisfied that his charge was thoroughly conquered, he desisted from his efforts; "I guess he'll be a pretty good elephant for a while."

"I hope so, for one," said Bert.

"I want to thank you, Miss O'Grady. You saved my life. When I was there on the ground I thought it was all up with me."

"Don't speak of it. I am glad it ended as well as it did."

"It was a mighty brave thing, though. Not many men would dare to do what you did, or do it as promptly and well. You are the pluckiest girl I ever saw."

"We'll let it go at that, then," laughed Bert, wondering what the elephant trainer would say if he knew how much of a "gir!" he really was.

"Tip will have a better opinion of you, too, after this, as well as of me, or I miss my guess. I shouldn't wonder if you became good friends."

Bert said nothing about his latest exploit, but Moses took pains to spread the news of it as soon as possible. Our hero was overwhelmed with praise and congratulations, and it was agreed upon every hand that Rosie O'Grady was an acquisition the circus could not afford to lose.

Bert did not allow his almost fatal encounter with Tip to keep him away from the elephant tent.

He was interested in the great brutes, and thought he should like to know them better. Moses, too, he liked, and enjoyed watching him put his giant charges through their paces.

So it happened that considerable of his spare time was spent in the company of the elephant trainer.

"You just make friends with these elephants, miss," said Moses. "It may stand you in good some day. Though they are unruly and ugly at times, elephants sometimes are very faithful to persons they take a fancy to. Take a little pains to make friends with them, and I'm sure you won't be sorry."

Bert followed this advice, and the elephants came to know him and to look eagerly for his coming, for he filled his pockets with peanuts or other things they were fond of before he went in.

Singularly enough, it was Tip, the one-time rebel and would-be murderer, who seemed to favor him more than all. He would plainly show his pleasure when Bert came in, and would reach out his trunk and beg for dainties in a manner almost human.

"Tip has taken a big fancy to you," said Moses.

"Yes," replied Bert, skeptically; "it's either that or he's fonder of the peanuts than the others."

"Wait and see," said Moses.

Two days later he had some news for Bert.

"The old man wants somebody to ride one of the elephants in the morning parades," he said. "How would you like to do it, Miss O'Grady?"

"The old man" meant Mr. Bridgman.

"Ride one of them? How?" asked Bert.

"He's going to have a howdah on the elephant's back and wants some one to sit in it."

"I should think he would select you for that position."

"Hardly. He don't want any grizzled old chap like me if he can get a pretty young lady like Miss O'Grady," laughed Moses.

"That will do, sir. No more compliments, if you please," replied Bert, imitating the air and manner of a young lady to perfection.

"How about the elephant riding?"

"Oh, I am perfectly willing to sit in the howdah if Mr. Bridgman desires it."

"Do you care particularly which elephant you ride on? Would you mind if it were Tip?"

"Not at all. It is all the same to me."

So the arrangement was made.

It was subjected to revision, however, as soon as the matter

came to Mabel's ears. She declared that she positively must ride in the howdah, too.

"But aren't you afraid?" asked Bert.

"What, with you? Not at all," replied Mabel, promptly and decidedly.

"You've got too high an opinion of me," laughed Bert, coloring. "I am not invincible."

"I've got my opinion and I'm going to keep it. It isn't too high, either," declared Mabel.

Seeing the uselessness of prolonging the discussion, Bert subsided.

The next day was the one on which he and Mabel were to make their *début* as elephant riders.

At the proper time, as the morning procession was forming, Moses had Tip, gayly caparisoned and with a gorgeous howdah upon his back, waiting in line.

Bert and Mabel mounted by means of a rope ladder to the car, and seated themselves within, and in a few minutes the procession was in motion.

It was a country village called Bentonville where they were to show that day. The people, of course, had turned out in force, not only the inhabitants of the town, but numbers from miles around, for the circus came but once a year.

Tippoo Tib behaved very well on the whole, though at first the car on his back, to which he was unaccustomed, seemed to make him uneasy.

But Bert spoke to him reassuringly and the now well-known voice had a quieting effect upon the elephant. He went along docilely enough. Our hero could not help thinking, however, that it would have been better to have given him a few rehearsals with the howdah before it was tried in public.

Still all seemed to be going very well.

But Fate was lying in wait for the discomfiture and undoing of Tip. Fate on this occasion had her abode in the being of a small boy.

Said small boy had come out to see the parade. He stood in the front row of spectators watching the circus go by, and his heart was filled with joy at the sight. The measure of his happiness was full or almost so.

But there was one thing wanting. The small boy had some big torpedoes in his pocket that he yearned to use. He knew they would make a splendid noise, and it seemed a shame not to fire them off at once.

"Wouldn't it be bully to throw them into the middle of the circus," he thought. "I bet they just would jump."

While this entrancing thought was in his mind the elephants came along, and the small boy's decision was taken in a trice.

"I'll throw my torpedoes at the elifints. Won't it be fine to see them dance!"

With the recklessness and deviltry characteristic of the small boy, he selected Tip as the first object of his operations.

"I wantee see if he'll sling them people ont'er that house on his back," he thought.

To think was to act. Into his pocket went a hand, out it came, was raised, drawn back and swung forward, and the torpedo was hurled.

Bang!

The missile struck Tip on the head, squarely between the eyes, and exploded with what was to him a frightful noise.

He was alarmed on the instant. He reared up, waved his trunk in the air, and began to trumpet shrilly.

"Look out, look out! The elephant's going to run away!" was the affrighted cry raised by the spectators.

"Look out, or he'll tread on you!"

The frightened people pressed back hastily from the curb, and those who were not hemmed in by the crowd turned and ran. A panic was imminent.

But Bert Breeziway did not lose his presence of mind.

"Down, Tip, down!" he exclaimed, sharply, to the elephant.

The brute, however, gave no heed to the familiar tones; in his fright it is doubtful if he recognized them.

Suddenly whirling about he made for a spot where the crowd

was most open. People saw him coming, and with frantic cries made haste to get out of his way.

The elephant burst through the crowd and started on a wild run down a side street. He was thoroughly aroused, and it was impossible to tell what damage might not be done before he quieted down.

The position of Bert and Mabel was one of the greatest peril; while from the rear could be heard the cries of persons who had probably been trampled on, and doubtless fatally injured by the elephant in his mad rush through the crowd.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MABEL'S SECRET ENEMY.

Tippoo Tib was losing no time in getting over the ground. He rushed along at a rapid pace, despite Bert's commands to him to halt.

The elephant kept on down the street to the end, and then straight onward still. The thoroughfare was continued in a country road, and along this the animal made his way.

A new danger now became apparent. Trees grew on either side of the way and their branches extended overhead.

So far there had been room enough for the elephant and the howdah to pass. But should it transpire that the branches grew lower further on, which was more than likely, the most serious consequences might ensue.

A branch, thick and strong, grew out low across the road. Its height from the ground was such that it would evidently just about graze the elephant's back. As for the howdah—

"It's coming!" thought Bert.

He put his arm around Mabel, holding the cushions tightly about her form. At the same time he made one last attempt to avert the peril.

"Stop, Tip, stop!" he shouted.

The command was as vain as before; the elephant rushed on. Bert set his teeth together and waited.

A moment later the catastrophe occurred.

Tip came under the limb and passed it safely, but it caught the howdah squarely at the bottom.

There was a frightful shock. Then the howdah was torn from its lashings. The elephant rushed on, and the car turned half over and fell to the ground.

"Oh!" came one frightened scream from Mabel.

But Bert's arms were around her and he held her close, determined to shield her with his own body all he could.

"Don't be afraid," he started to say, as they were hurled over and shot downward; but before the words were fully out of his mouth something happened.

His head came in contact with some harder object, and he was conscious of a sharp pain, and then came oblivion.

When Bert came back to consciousness and opened his eyes again he stared about him in bewilderment.

He was lying in a comfortable bed, his head resting on soft pillows, and with spotless linen sheets and a snowy white counterpane over him.

Opposite the foot of the bed, but several feet from it, was a window, shaded by lace curtains, through whose interstices the sunbeams stole, falling upon the floor and partly upon the bed.

"What does it all mean?" thought Bert.

Just then he tried to shift his position and received a shock. A sharp twinge of pain ran up his left leg and it felt as heavy as lead.

"Great heavens! What does this mean?" gasped Bert.

But he knew instinctively what had happened; his leg was broken.

"Well, here is a fix for fair!" he exclaimed.

He had spoken aloud, and the sound attracted the attention of some one sitting back in one corner of the room.

The person came forward to the bedside, and he was overjoyed to see that it was Mabel. She walked with a springing step and there was a smile on her face. She, at least, had suffered no harm.

"Oh, Bert! I did not know you were awake," she said, leaning over the bed and laying a hand on his.

"I wasn't—till about a minute ago," was his prompt answer. "What's all this business, anyhow?"

"Oh, Bert! You—you broke your leg, and all on my account!"

She took his face in her hands and began to sob.

"That's all right; that don't amount to anything. You didn't get hurt, did you, Mab?"

"No. You see, you held me so that when we fell you were under me, and that was what caused it. The doctor said that if I hadn't fallen on you your leg wouldn't have been broken."

And Mabel began to cry again.

"That's all right, Mab; don't cry. I didn't want you to get hurt. But I thought I hit on my head first?"

"So you did, and that is cut, too. The doctor had to attend to it."

Bert put his hand to his forehead and felt a bandage.

"How did we get here?" he asked. "What became of Tip?"

"I don't know where he is. He ran right on, and I haven't heard anything about him since. You see, Bert, where we were thrown off was only a short distance down the road from this house. Mr. Felton lives here, and he is very rich. Well, he was going over to the village on horseback and came along just as we fell. He had us brought here at once by his servants, had a doctor come and attend to you, and everything. It was awful good of him, wasn't it, Bert?"

"Yes," said Bert. Then, after a short pause, he asked:

"How long have I been here, Mab?"

"It is about two hours," she replied.

For a few minutes there was silence, as Bert lay thinking.

"Here is Mr. Felton, Bert!" exclaimed Mabel, suddenly.

Our hero turned his head and saw that a man had entered the room. He was tall and well formed, with regular features. A mustache graced his upper lip. He had the appearance and manners of a gentleman.

"How is your patient now, Miss Mabel?" he asked as he advanced into the room.

That voice! Bert started as if shot. Where had he heard it before?

"He is awake, thank you, sir. I shall have to stay with him, though."

"Oh, that is not necessary," said Mr. Felton.

Where had he heard those very words before? Where had he heard that voice? Bert strained his brain in the effort to remember.

Ah! now he had it.

It was the voice of the mysterious "captain" of the band of abductors of the lonely cabin in the woods near Hazelton, where Bert had been laid bound upon the table and given into the hands of the old hag, Meg—the prison from which Hugo, the giant, had rescued him. This was the unknown leader of the unknown men, he who had stood back in the corner, with a mask over his face, so that Bert should not know him if by a strange fate they ever met again.

But the boy did know him. He was sure of it; he would recognize that voice anywhere. The accents, the intonation—they were the very same!

And this was Mabel's deadly enemy, the man who for some mysterious reason sought her life! And they were in his house, in his hands, in his power!

CHAPTER XXIX.

TIPPOO TIB KILLS THE RIGHT MAN.

Bert Breeziway felt his heart sicken within him as he recognized his host and comprehended the situation.

What Felton had sought to do in the past he would certainly do in the present. Undoubtedly they were in the greatest danger.

"How are you feeling now?" asked Felton, coming up to the bed.

"Very well, under the circumstances," said Bert. "I must thank you for your kindness."

He looked up into the man's eyes, wondering if he recognized him as his former prisoner. He did not doubt that he did.

"I guess you will get along all right," said the other. "I will send some one in presently with a little lunch and to see if there is anything else you want."

Bert thanked him, and after a few more words Felton withdrew.

Our hero had another thought.

"Mab," he said, "they know I am not a girl, don't they?"

"Yes," answered Mabel. "When the doctor cut the hair away to bandage your head he found out it was a wig."

"Did they say anything to you about it?"

"No, not a word. But I know they know."

Bert relapsed into silence and thought. Even though in the midst of enemies, had it not been for his injury, he would not have feared. But with a broken leg, what could he do to defend Mabel when the danger came? He felt as helpless as a babe, and grated his teeth as he thought of his own impotence.

For a moment a feeling of despair swept over Bert. But then his courage arose with the desperation of the case.

"Mab," he said, "go and look out of the window a few moments, please."

"What for, Bert?"

"I am going to get up."

"No, no; you must not do that. The doctor said you could not get up for several days."

"Mab, you can trust me, can't you? You have confidence in me?"

"Of course I have, Bert."

"Then believe me, I am thoroughly in earnest when I say that it is absolutely necessary for our own safety that we get away from here at once. No, don't look at me that way. I haven't got any fever or delirium; I know just what I am talking about. Perhaps you will believe me a little more when I tell you that I know positively that this Mr. Felton is the man who hired those two tramps to kidnap you, with the intention of eventually putting you out of the way. I will tell you more when we get outside."

Mabel was thoroughly convinced now. Her face was the color of marble and she was trembling like a leaf.

"Don't be afraid," said Bert. "We will get through all right. I will beat these rascals yet, even if I have a broken leg. Once we get away from here we'll be all right."

His companion made no further objection to his plans. She went to the window and looked out, while he put on the gar-

ments of Miss Rosie O'Grady, that young lady who now, alas, was unmasked.

At last he was ready.

"Mab, this room is on the ground floor, is it not?"

"Yes."

"That's good. Now, I must have a pair of crutches; can't get along without them."

Here it seemed they were brought to a standstill, but Bert's fertility of invention came to the rescue.

"See if the bed has slats," he said.

"Yes," exclaimed Mabel, on examination, and pulled out two of them.

Using these as crutches and partly supported by Mabel, Bert managed to walk to the door.

It opened upon the lawn. Fortunately, the house was built partly upon a slope of ground, so that while there was a wide stoop of several steps in front, there was but one step to the rear entrance, out of which the fugitives now made their way.

"While there's life there's hope," thought Bert. "Never say die."

But his will-power was greater than his physical strength. They had only got as far as the barn when he felt that he must stop.

"Mab," said Bert, "I am afraid I won't be able to get on fast enough. It is harder work than I thought it would be. Do you think you could go on alone to the village—it can't be so far—find Mr. Bridgman and tell him what has happened?"

"I will do just what you say, Bert. You know what is best."

"Well, then, I think your best plan would be to look out for a farmhouse. The first one you come to ask them to hitch up and drive you in to the circus. Tell them Mr. Bridgman will pay whatever they ask and they'll do it quick enough. Then tell him everything, and he'll know what to do."

"All right, Bert, I will go, then, though I don't like to leave you at all. I—oh, what's that?"

The last words were called forth by an unexpected occurrence. There was a sound of heavy footbeats and the next minute along the road, coming into their view from beyond the barn, appeared Tippoo Tib, the runaway elephant!

"Oh, Bert, look, look! It's Tip!"

"I see him. Here, Tip, Tip!" called our hero.

"Don't call him; he will hurt you."

"No, he won't. I'm not at all afraid of that."

At sound of the familiar voice the elephant stopped and looked around, turning his head in several directions before he discovered Bert. But as soon as he did so he came running toward him, flourishing his trunk and giving every indication of joy.

He stopped in front of the boy and put his trunk out for peanuts.

Bert found he had a few which had not been taken from his pockets and gave them to the elephant. Tip promptly disposed of them.

"Now I'm all right!" exclaimed Bert, joyfully. "I'd like to see Felton or any one else dare to lay a hand on me while Tip is here!"

Barely had Bert spoken when around the corner of the barn came the person to whom he referred. The villain was followed by two big stout men-servants whom he had brought along to assist him.

"Ah, here they are now!" he exclaimed, at sight of the fugitives. He started as he saw the elephant, but did not seem alarmed.

"What does this folly mean?" he demanded, addressing Bert.

"Do you not know that the doctor said you must not move, much less get out of bed?"

"It means that I know you, villain, and that I would not trust myself in your house for an hour," returned our hero, boldly.

"What! You are impudent!"

Felton raised his cane, menacingly.

"Look out for the elephant, sir!" warned one of the men.

Tip had moved up to Bert's side, and his little eyes, directed at Felton, had an ugly look in them. Plainly he did not like the man's actions.

"You had better be careful," said our hero. "That elephant is a pet of mine and he gets ugly on occasions. If you attempt to strike me I won't be responsible for the consequences."

"Won't you? Don't think you can frighten me with your big talk. Take that, and let it teach you better!" cried Felton.

Rushing at Bert he brought the cane down in a swinging stroke that gave the boy a vicious cut across the face.

But he had no time to repeat the blow, if such was his intention.

With a hoarse bellow of rage the elephant lunged out and seized him with his trunk.

"Tip, Tip!" cried Bert, frantically.

Heedless of the shouts, the great animal, encircling Felton's body with his trunk, swung him high in the air, then hurled him with great force to the ground and trampled the prostrate body with his huge forefeet.

The two men-servants ran, terror-stricken, for the house.

Bert and Mabel were left alone with the angry elephant, which was thoroughly aroused again and a very demon.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW IT ALL CAME OUT.

"Tip, Tip!" cried Bert, frantically. "Stop, Tip!"

"Tip!" repeated another voice. "Aha, here's the rascal, now!"

"Moses!" exclaimed Bert, joyfully.

Moses, indeed, it was, come up at this most opportune moment, at the head of several of the circus men, with whom he had been searching for the animal since he had bolted from the parade.

Moses did not waste any time in words, but rushed at Tip with a pitchfork, and as soon as the animal saw the weapon and recognized his master he drew back and became as submissive as a lamb.

"Killed a man!" exclaimed the trainer. "I wouldn't have had this happen for a fortune."

"It is a terrible thing," said Bert, "though the man is one of the greatest scoundrels that ever went unhung."

They bent over Felton and found he was not dead. In his haste the elephant's feet had only grazed his body, and had it not been for the shock sustained when the animal hurled him to the ground he might have recovered. As it was, he was injured internally and had but a short time to live.

"He must have a doctor!" exclaimed Bert. "One of you run over to the house and tell them to get one in a hurry."

One of the circus men darted away at once.

But the injured man feebly shook his head.

"I don't want a doctor," he managed to say. "I want a confessor. I am past mortal aid. I have been a bad, sinful man all my life. May God have mercy on my guilty soul!"

"He will have mercy," said Mabel, bending over the dying man with tears in her eyes. "He will forgive you if you pray to him like that."

"You say this to me!" exclaimed Felton. "You, whom I have wronged, robbed and tried to murder! Do you forgive me?"

"Yes, yes; freely!" cried Mabel.

The dying man closed his eyes a moment with weakness; then he opened them again.

"Lift my head up a little," he said. "I can talk easier that way, and I have a confession to make."

They lifted his head, and two of the circus men put their coats under it. This seemed to ease him somewhat.

"Listen closely to what I say," he said, "for my time is short, and I shall have to use few words.

"I do not rightfully own this house, or barn, or this estate, or any of the millions I have invested. They all belong to Mabel Trescott."

A murmur of amazement greeted the statement, and none was more surprised than Mabel herself. The dying man went on:

"I have been a wicked man. God forgive me!"

"He will forgive you," said Mabel.

"Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, I do."

"Pray for me."

Mabel prayed simply and fervently aloud for the soul of the dying man. As he listened a look of peace crept over his face.

Once more he spoke slowly and with difficulty.

"Tell—my wife you—are Mabel Trescott. She—knows about the—will, but she—didn't know what a—scoundrel I was. She didn't—know I knew—where Mabel was or—plotted against her life. She—is a good woman. Poor Annie! Tell her I—died—thinking—of—her!"

And as the last word left his lips his eyes closed and he was dead.

The circus men gently bore the body into the house. Bert judged it best that Mabel should stay there, also, and at her solicitation, remained with her.

Moses and the circus men took Tippoo Tip back to the show, and bore the unexpected tidings of what had happened to Mr. Bridgman.

Mrs. Felton, who was absent from home on a visit in a distant town, was sent for and came at once. She was at first almost prostrated by the death of her husband.

After the funeral was over she wanted to turn all the property over to Mabel and take herself off at once, but the generous-hearted girl would not hear of it.

"You must stay right here," she said. "There is enough for both of us, and I shall want some one for company, you know."

She insisted so strongly on this arrangement that Mrs. Felton finally consented. Mabel never had cause to regret her action, for in all things Mrs. Felton has since been like a mother to her.

"Well, now, what am I going to do?" asked Bert.

"You are going to stay right here and keep quiet until your leg gets better, for one thing," said Mabel.

While he was playing invalid Bert thought it would be a good idea to write a letter to his old chum at Forest Heights Academy, Charlie Chester, apprising him of his whereabouts, how he had got along and what happened generally since their parting.

In prompt reply he received an enthusiastic scrawl from Chester, the substance of which was as follows:

"DEAR BERT: I could jump to the skies, I was so glad to hear from you. Come back, come back! Just as soon as your leg will allow you to travel, hustle right back to Forest Heights. You are all solid here. Bullard wasn't crazy at all, but it was a put-up job between him and Senner to make you believe he was, get scared and run away, just as you did. It has all come out, and,

oh, wasn't there a tempest! The doc wanted to expel Bullard at once and the fellows wanted to tar-and-feather him and Senner. But the two worthies settled the matter by running away. We don't know where they have gone, and don't care. We are all just crazy to see you. You can have the earth around here if you want it. Come at the very earliest second you possibly can. (Signed) "CHET."

As Bert read this a great load was lifted from his heart. He was not, then, responsible for the loss of a fellow-creature's reason. Glorious news!

Mabel would not hear of Bert's leaving the house until his leg was perfectly well. She was afraid there would be some evil results to his sudden flight with her from the house.

But good treatment and a capable doctor performed wonders, and in about two months the limb was as well as ever. Not even a temporary limp remained as a reminder of the injury.

Then Bert and Mabel went back to the Great Continental Circus, not to appear as performers again, but to say farewell. They said it to the Living Skeleton and the Bearded Lady, to the giant and the Fat Woman, to Signor Bonani, Mademoiselle Jeanne, Moses, Mr. Sellers and Mr. Bridgman, friends tried and true.

Bert had written home at the same time he wrote to Chester. His mother had been worried greatly about him, but his father had simply said "he knew the boy would turn up all right. Only the good die young."

Mr. Bridgman and Mr. Sellers have gone out of the circus business and are now joint proprietors of one of the best-paying theatres in Chicago. Mr. Bridgman was Mabel's guardian until she became of age, which happened a few years ago.

Tippoo Tip has never killed another man, and it is hardly likely that he will. He is still under charge of Moses, who is now superintendent of one of the largest public museums in the country.

The Giant and Fat Woman, neither of whom has ever had cause to regret the unique elopement and marriage, have retired as curiosities and are living in private on the fruits of years of museum posing. May they live long and happily!

The Living Skeleton and the Bearded Lady, who decided to also become man and wife, are still in harness. At this writing they are filling an engagement at a museum in New York City.

Signor Bonani and Mademoiselle Jeanne, who will never forget how she transformed Bert into a girl and fooled the entire circus company and all the world in general, are at present two of the bright, particular stars of the Barnum-Bailey show.

Bert returned to Forest Heights to finish the course. Then he went up to Yale, where he is now, with Charlie Chester, who is still his chum. After he graduates an important event is scheduled to take place.

Just about that time Miss Mabel Trescott, heiress, is going to be married. Who is to be the fortunate other party to the transaction we will not particularize enough to say, but will leave our readers to guess, with the remark that Miss Trescott is wont to say that "there are plenty of boys and plenty of Berts in this world, but there is only one Bert Breeziway."

THE END.

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